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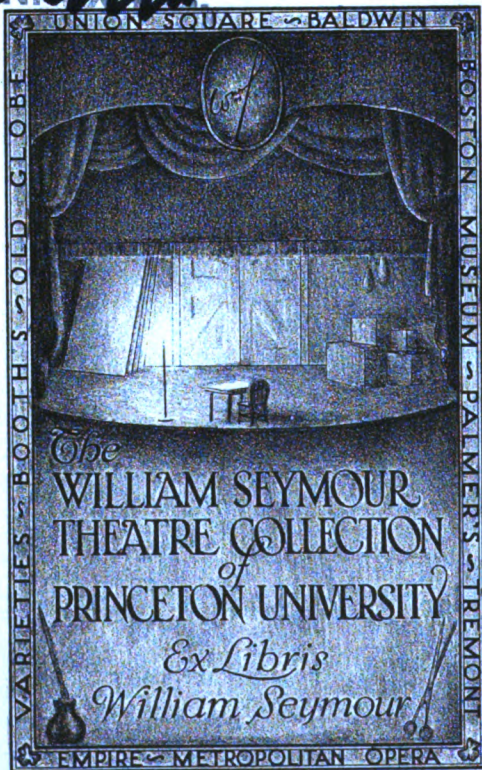
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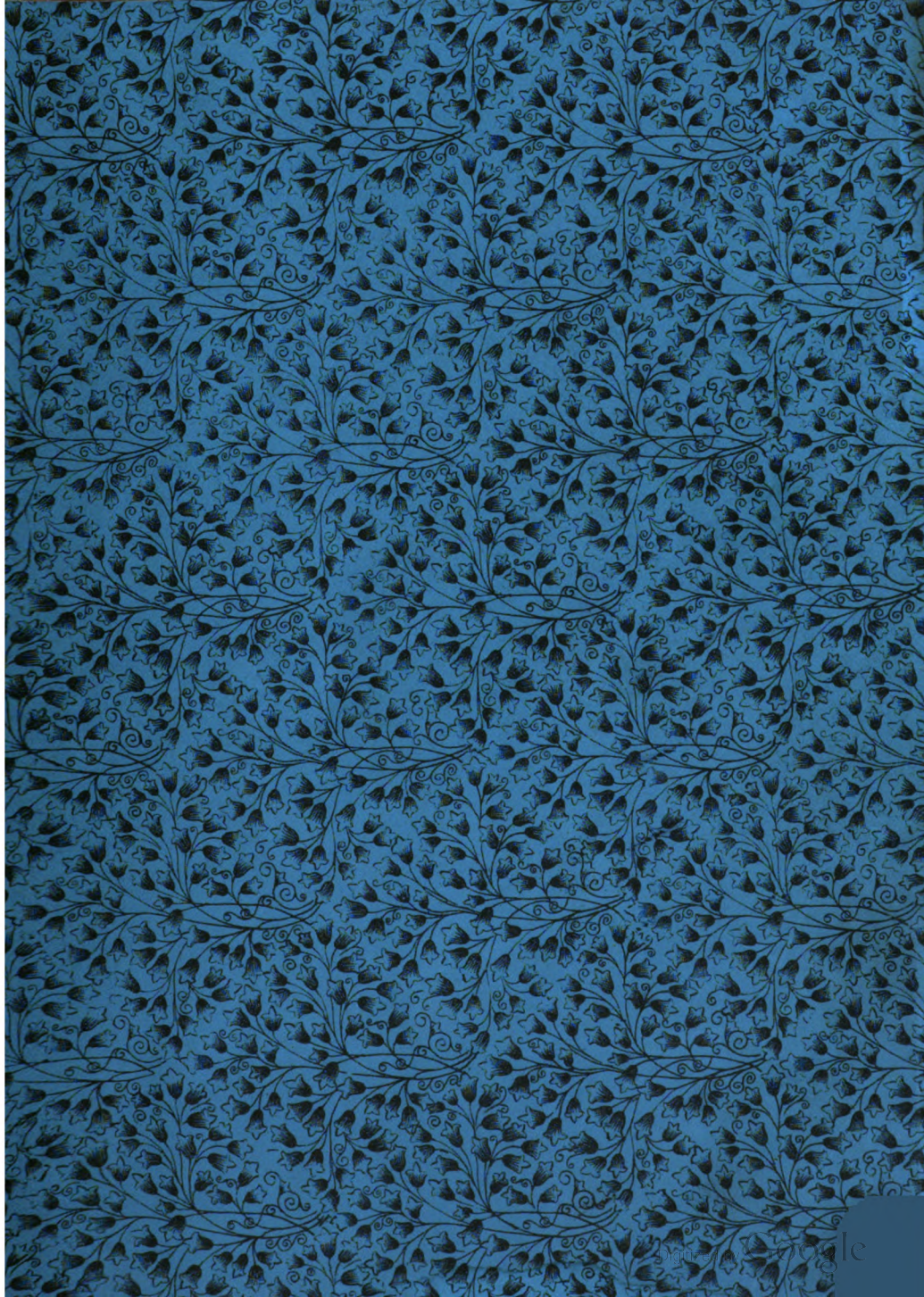


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A PROLOGUE.

THE curtain rises, silence falls,
 And minds attuned to gloom or wit,
 Give expectation to the stalls,
 And anxious faces to the pit.
 In plays of ancient Greece we found
 A form that after time forsook ;
 Still I, your Chorus, must propound
 The argument that guides our book.

A garland of old memories ;
 Tales of romance and kindliness ;
 Grief's calendar ; exultant cries
 Heard up the mountain of success ;
 The hate that dies, the loves that live,
 The fun of which we never tire—
 These humble gifts we freely give
 To friends around the Christmas fire !

The young beginners, struck with fright,
 Demand your mercy on their knees ;
 But if I guess your thoughts aright,
 You'll spare such favourites as these.
 If there be error, mine's the blame,
 Who forced on them a novel part ;
 I think you'll cheer them all the same,
 And Chorus thanks them from his heart.

Toil is a pleasure when we know
 The sympathy that friendship sends,
 And Chorus gratefully can show
 A tried companionship of friends.
 We most of us play many parts,
 But let us thank this merry age,
 That there's one DOOR to all your hearts,
 And we have entered it—THE STAGE.

C. W. S.

THE STAGE DOOR

EDITED BY

STORIES
BY
THOSE WHO
ENTER IT.

CLEMENT W. SCOTT



THE
STAGE DOOR:

STORIES BY THOSE WHO ENTER IT

EDITED BY

CLEMENT W. SCOTT



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THE STAGE DOOR.

THE STAGE DOOR KEEPER.

BY CLEMENT W. SCOTT.



A MEAN and narrow opening in an unromantic wall—an entrance less pretentious than any that can be found at the side of a factory gate—an approach difficult to find, hidden up a blind alley,

swarming with miscellaneous children, and lumbered up with ragged and disconsolate-looking scenery crumbling to ruin—a dark prison-looking gate, at whose ominous sight have fallen down the wreck of torn forests and the glory of departed palaces; the guardian an overworked and faithful servant, and the sentinel a carpenter, resting from his labours and smoking a clay pipe—this is the approach to a paradise that feeds the unhealthy imagination with unworthy fancies, and has given the text for many a lying sermon—this is the Stage Door.

It is always well that people should be slightly acquainted with the subject they dis-

cuss; and I sometimes wish that those who are so eloquent in denouncing scenes with which they are evidently unfamiliar, lives of which they know nothing, and professions which might be far more honourable and honoured were they not so persistently maligned, boasted half the philosophy, perspicuity, shrewd judgment, and common sense of my old friend Tom Porter. He was a stage-door keeper, and a man of vast experience, great memory, and considerable attainments. His father had been an actor who, under another name, was famous in the dramatic annals of his time, and his son promised to follow very close upon his father's footsteps, when his bright career was cut short by a blundering half-drunken carpenter, who left a trap open one night, and crippled the poor fellow for life. Misfortune, so I have been told, fell heavily upon Tom Porter's family soon after this deplorable accident, that nearly broke the heart of an honourable and ambitious man. He had seen all the great actors from the time he could toddle to Drury Lane or Covent Garden; he had lived in an atmosphere of art; the talk was of nothing else but acting at home, over the baked joint on Sunday down to bed-time on Saturday night, from morning till night, it was nothing but theatres and theatre-going, old texts and new readings; and young Tom had dreamed of playing

Hamlet, Macbeth, Werner, and Richelieu with the best of them, when the hospital doctor pressed his hand, and told him at the very outset of his young life that he would never act again, and poor Tom turned his face to the wall, and sobbed like a child, "God's will be done!" Yes, my dear sir, don't smile. Actors can pray, like the rest of us, and they have hearts of their own, I can assure you.

But how to remain at the theatre? It would have been death to Tom Porter to desert that familiar ship. The very smell of the place fascinated him; he would have taken checks at the top of the gallery staircase sooner than leave the dear old walls; but it was not so bad as he thought, for he was appointed confidential secretary to successive managers at the best established theatres in London; and it was only when age and infirmities crept upon him that old Tom went through the stages of prompter and copyist, till finally he was installed close by the stage door in that bright and cosy little recess, hung round with pictures, warmed by a bright fire, and made companionable by a comfortable cat. It was here that I made the good fellow's acquaintance, and derived such constant pleasure from his interesting and varied conversation.

"Yes, sir," he used to say to me, "there are good theatres and bad theatres, just as there are good parsons and bad parsons, or good judges and bad judges. We're none of us perfect in this world, except, no doubt, the good gentlemen who know such a precious lot more about our business than we do ourselves. Look round here, sir, now do, and see for yourself, where are the broughams, and bouquets, and diamonds, and the swells waiting outside, that the papers make so much fuss about! It all seems pretty neat, and

tidy, and decent now, don't it? You can sit there in the corner by the fire, and see them pass. All right, sir, sit you down; don't mind the black cat, old Othello always takes the most comfortable seat in the room."

And so I sat down and observed. A constant swaying backwards and forwards of an adjacent door; dressers and messengers passing in and out with a "Good evening, Mr. Porter," or a "Good night, Tom;" modest women and quiet men passing in and out in an orderly, business-like way; an occasional author, who disconsolately called for his manuscript, or exultingly deposited a great roll of brown paper that would have broken down the rack, and was accordingly put aside for the manager—why, there was really nothing in the outside appearance of the place to distinguish it from a factory, when the wheels of the machinery of pleasure spin round between seven o'clock and midnight. Where on earth is the fascination of the stage door, and the glittering revelry of life behind the scenes? I could not find anything of the kind, and old Tom was delighted at my antipathy to the dull and unromantic side of a world spangled with so much idealism and fancy. No sensible spectator likes to have his illusions destroyed. He does not care to see the ropes and spars, and guys and pulleys; to be convinced that it is not a forest, but canvas; not a grass bank, but matting; not a sparkling river, but glass and gelatine; that the heroes and heroines discuss the ordinary affairs of life in the green-room; that the adorable actress is compelled to paint her face and her eyebrows, and never fails to smother you with powder when she shakes her head; that the pale student Hamlet looks as brown as a Zulu Kaffir, and the love-sick Romeo is daubed over like a Red Indian. No one has a right

behind the scenes; not that there is the slightest temptation in such a prosy workshop, but because it is cruel to tear down the veil and expose the machinery of so excellent an art. It is the dreariest and dirtiest of spots.

So Tom Porter laughed when I obstinately refused to stir a step further than his comfortable sanctum, to which I obtained admission through some trifling service I had rendered to one of his family who was very dear to him indeed.

Returning from the seaside one summer, I happened to be in a bad railway accident, and was mercifully preserved. I was able to pay some attention to the distresses of my unfortunate fellow-passengers, who stood disconsolate and dazed, in a hideous wreck and heartrending confusion I can scarcely forget, or recall without a shudder.

The sun-burned children crying for their dead mothers; the ruin of life and property piled up amidst pipes, and pleasure baskets, and broken toys; the cruel engine lying twisted and torn, in a cloud of blinding mist; the doctors hurrying to their mangled patients, presented a most distressing scene. Alone, and apparently uncared for, I found swooning on the embankment a young girl. At first I thought she was dead, so fair, calm, and undisturbed she looked, but a little brandy revived her, and I found that she was more frightened than hurt.

Her nerves were far more injured than her body, and I soon saw that it was absolutely necessary to remove her immediately from the scene. She cried piteously for her father, and implored to be taken home; and between the paroxysms of her fear, it was easy to see that her mind was intensely troubled with the thought that the news of the accident would arrive in London before the poor

girl could get home. "Oh, sir, I am travelling alone," she said; "if father hears of it, it will break his heart. What shall I do? what shall I do?"

I reflected for an instant, and decided. A couple of miles away from the scene of the accident was the station of a branch line to London. A few shillings to a lad procured me a fly, by merciful chance we caught a train at the side station, and we were back in London just as they were howling the news of the frightful accident all over the streets. On the journey home I had ascertained that the father of my little *protégée* was a stage-door keeper at a theatre in the immediate neighbourhood of the Strand—where news bad and good spreads like wildfire. So I told the cabman to drive as fast as he could to the stage door of the theatre. It was best to take the bull by the horns, and to prevent mischief as soon as possible.

I found a crowd of good-natured folk round the door that led to the theatre, and inside the stage-door keeper's box I could hear distinctly that strange, low, moaning wail as of a strong man in pain. It is terrible to hear a man sob; and all these much-abused women at the vicious theatre were actually drying their eyes, and trying to comfort a broken-hearted father who thought he would never see his daughter again.

"Make way there," I said, as I tried to make an opening through the crowd.

The usual response came; on one side the surly ill-conditioned "Why should I make way for you?" on the other, "Why not let the gentleman pass?" They did let the gentleman pass when they saw he had a young and frightened girl on his arm. There was a silence, and then we heard—

"Father! father!"

"Oh! Madge, my little one; thank God!"

That was all. We heard no more after that. They were united in an embrace that belongs to things heavenly, and that gives one a lump in the throat to think of it. And, strange to say, from that instant I was made welcome whenever I cared to look in upon Tom Porter the old stage-door keeper. The best chair in the little den was always at my disposal, the warmest corner was mine by the fire out of all the draughts; I was allowed to smoke a pipe if I leaned very much up the chimney; and it was as much as my comfort was worth if I refused an occasional pull at the comforting "dog's nose" that simmered on the hob.

The honest fellow could never get it out of his head that I had saved his daughter's life, and that I was a kind of hero to be rewarded with all the hospitable honours of his paternal mansion. I had done nothing of the kind, but he insisted I was wrong, and there was no good in arguing the point. That reconciliation made a deep impression on the old man. She was alive who was dead. His heart made one bound from sorrow to unspeakable joy, and the happy accident of courtesy earned for me the never-ending gratitude of as honest a soul as ever lived.

Fancy this, Mr. Preacher, you who are never weary of raising your eloquent voice against the antechamber of Hades, although I am sorry to say you use a very much stronger expression; fancy this, Mr. Tub Spouter in the parks, who tell me when I am walking out amidst the fields and the flowers that if I dare to enter a theatre I had better renounce all hope of salvation; fancy this, my fine ladies who talk about "actors and actresses and such kind of people;" fancy this, Mr. Superciliousness, who argue in some strange kind of way that those who possess

unsavable souls are somehow connected with a most elevating and regenerating art, kept down from salvation by cruel prejudice and viler cant. Why, here was this venerable keeper of the door that leads to the stage, who had actually brought up his large family in an honest and God-fearing manner, and regarded his pure and tender little daughter as one of the best of the blessings that had cheered his simple life.

The three cosiest scenes that at present appeal to my imagination are, the inside of a travelling caravan; the bar parlour of a country inn, with a happy circle enjoying the first autumn fire; and that small and neatly-arranged little den where the stage-door keeper is supposed to sulk away his life, and to be the intermediary between Cupid and the postman. I always envied our old friend Mrs. Jarley, and can conceive no existence more delightful than to be dragged in a house upon wheels about the leafy lanes of Old England; to sit outside in the morning, and eat your breakfast off a drum, and to get to bed in a comfortable alcove when the mists begin to rise and the land is chill. And then there is the bar parlour, as seen by the lonely traveller, who peeps through the crimson curtains, and sees the firelight glancing upon the polished mahogany, blue china in a corner cupboard, and old Dutch clock that ticks in a paternal fashion over the contented scene. Well is it for those who cannot enjoy realities to taste occasionally the pleasures of imagination.

The caravan is the home of giants, dwarfs, hardware sellers, and ubiquitous cheap jacks; the country inn is the rest of the landscape painter; but the Cockney follower of art must warm his toes by the stage door fire.

Fortified by this strange friendship of which I have spoken, and flattered by the

warm attachment that old Tom expressed for me, I found myself very often, particularly in winter, a guest at his hospitable fire. My passion for the art of which he was so humble a representative grew under his guidance. He lent me strange old theatrical books that he had picked up at odd bookstalls, showed me rare prints he had collected, and delighted me with curious reminiscences of his valuable experience.

Old Tom Porter must have been a notable exception to his race, for I am given to understand that the Cerberus of the stage door is sometimes a strange dog, who snarls and shows his teeth when any one approaches his kennel. "*Cave canem*" should be written up over his lodge, for his primary idea is to look upon every one as an intruder, and he takes a delight in keeping an author—who is his special abomination—in a thorough draught and in an ignominious position, in order to show how thoroughly he is the master, and the author is the slave. A fixed idea possesses him that the male portion of the Metropolis is in a combination to bear off the leading actress, storm the manager's castle, and hold high revel amidst the dirty ropes and grappling-irons that disfigure the hold of the theatrical ship. His first instinct is to act on the defensive, to assert his authority in a brusque and bearish manner, and to look upon the world outside his tub as a set of refractory carpenters and supernumeraries. I may be mistaken, but this is the prevailing notion of the keeper of the stage door.

Tom Porter belonged to quite a different school. He obtained influence and authority without a harsh tone or a coarse word. He loved women because they were gentle and sweet as his own nature. About him there was a certain air of distinction and good breeding, and he handed the letters

from the rack with the air of a courtier. And so it was that every one in the theatre made a friend and a confidant of the old man, they told him their troubles, and related their experiences, and with the aid of a prodigious memory, and a habit of jotting down what he heard, he managed to collect a fund of varied anecdotes and reminiscences. The most celebrated actors and actresses of the day had often dropped in for a chat with Tom Porter, to talk over old times, and compare notes, and so as his life had been devoted to the stage, and his tastes bound up in it, he became the storehouse to which many people referred when they were puzzled for a verification, circumstance, or a date. He was an encyclopædia in himself, and had a strange method of memory to bring scenes of the past before him.

The smiling retreat in which Tom Porter spent the best part of his days, now that his home was reduced to a simple lodging, his good wife was in her grave, and all his children scattered about the world, was hung about with pictures, all bearing upon the stage in some way or another.

One of these pictures always absorbed my attention. It haunted me, and somehow or other invariably fascinated my eyes towards it. Placed too high on the walls to enable a close inspection, it seemed to my short sight like a fair-haired woman, clothed in white, and on her death-bed. "Dear dead women, with such hair too! What's become of all the gold?" This familiar line haunted me whenever I looked at the picture. It was one of those strange, hungry faces that outstrip mere beauty with rare expression. The eyes closed now were a little sunken, and half overshadowed by the bar that marks both intellect and music. A large and full mouth gave the best character to the face,

and the hair, a luxurious river of gold, might have adorned the head of one of Raphael's Madonnas. Many would have scorned the idea of beauty in such a face, but it contained the reflection of strong character and soul, it represented an ideal nature, and in it was that tired and hunted look that mean nervous power and the exhaustion of keen susceptibility. What then was this strange picture of a fair, dead woman? Was it a Juliet in her tomb? a Desdemona on her death-bed? an Ophelia in her love swoon?

One night I was sitting alone with old Tom. It was bitter cold and dreary outside, and I suppose the play they were acting inside was unusually solemn, for not a sound could be heard through the swing-doors, and no carpenter, with some abnormal thirst upon him, disturbed our conversation and slouched out for his unnecessary beer. Neither of us spoke, and instinctively I found that I was looking at the picture.

"What is it, Tom? I didn't like to ask you, but what is it?"

"Eh! What?" said the old fellow, who was dozing off before the fire.

"The picture. What does it mean?"

"Where?"

"Up there!"

He took it down, and then I examined it for the first time. It was not Ophelia, or Juliet, or Desdemona. No Shakesperian heroine or romantic scene was here depicted. I rubbed away the dirt from the glass, and saw the figure of a fair English woman stretched upon a copper couch. She was wrapped in a white peignoir, and over her still white features trickled a silent stream of water that seemed to tighten the garments on her and to emphasize her shroud. It was the photograph of a dead woman in the Parisian Morgue.

"This is what jealousy brings them to," said old Tom.

"What do you mean? Who was she?"

"One of the kindest, dearest women I ever knew. God bless her! But because she had not admirers enough over here in England, she must needs leave the stage when she had made a considerable name, marry a foreigner, and settle in France. How the men loved her! Not because she was so very beautiful, you know, for her features were sharp, and her cheek-bones were strongly marked; but there was that in her face which scores of her rivals never had—an unsatisfied hunger, an undetermined longing, a pathetic weariness, a kind of something in her expression which seemed to say, 'Only love me and understand me, only be patient with me and let us learn one another, and there will come a sympathy and a union which mere fools do not understand.'

"Such women are not made for fools. The popular beauty, with a faultless face and a stereotyped expression, with a gaze on one side and a gaze on the other, always the same, the same vacant look, the same silly simper, the same attitude of self-satisfaction, as much as to say, 'I am a doll; I am very lovely, but don't rumple my nice silver paper or disarrange my curls,'—these are the women for the majority. But then they don't understand anything about it, and don't deserve anything better than a soulless face and a settled smile. The Frenchman did who married this poor creature, and he so well appreciated the prize that his jealousy became a madness. Women like men to be a little jealous, for it is in a certain sense a compliment. When it is exaggerated, it becomes a bore.

"To tell you the truth, I don't believe she ever liked the man. He overwhelmed her

with kindness, and that touched her heart. She pitied him and respected him; but never loved him. If she could have eaten gold he would have given it to her. Every wish was anticipated; every whim considered. Her life with him was one round of luxury and contented ease; but that is not love. A woman with a face like that, with such a restless, soaring, unsatisfied spirit, wanted a man with brain, and force, and power to love her. She was clever, and she desired intellect in her lover. She wanted to be led on to the higher tastes, culture, and light for which she inwardly craved. But she got suppers, dinners, smart dresses, and diamond rings, things that no woman despises, but then how very few women do they satisfy. However, she married him, and she was soon cloyed with the sweets of her married life. She cursed herself for her ingratitude; she wanted to love the man so much, and yet she couldn't.

"But she was loyal. A woman with a nature like hers, had only to hold up her finger, and she might have had lovers by the score; but she was loyal on my oath.

"Wearied with all this persistent devotion, and unsatisfied with her dissatisfaction, she lent herself to a deception innocently conceived, but one calculated to destroy the peace of her husband for ever. She meant no harm, but look at her there on her miserable death-bed. Her punishment came surely and swiftly enough.

"She had a brother, of whose existence her husband was unaware. He was a scamp, a bad lot, and had been transported years before for dishonesty in the bank in which he was employed. Her husband had been so good to her that she did not care to distress him with her family troubles, and so she,

perhaps foolishly, covered over that bad spot, and held her tongue.

"But she did not remember that the time would come when her brother's sentence would expire, and there must be an explanation. It did expire, and the brother came back to the world, penniless and an outcast.

"He found his sister out, he traced her to Paris, and, woe-begone wretch as he was, presented himself at her luxurious apartments, luckily when her husband was away.

"She was in a dilemma. She had not the heart to turn her brother away, and had not the strength to tell her husband. The most unfortunate course she could take, she took. Whenever her husband was out she received her brother, and delighted in surrounding his appearance with a mystery. Secret notes were conveyed to him. She admitted him to her apartments at unreasonable hours. No servant was taken into her confidence, and still in her heart desiring to spare her husband, she innocently compromised her reputation.

"It is impossible to keep these scandals secret, let women manoeuvre as they will. Tongues will wag; and who amongst us is without enemies?

"Some kind Iago, good, generous, upright, and self-denying creature, poured the necessary poison into the husband's ear. He received anonymous letters, and was told to be on his guard. 'English women are not to be trusted,' wrote the correspondent, in a female hand. You must remember the husband had a large fortune, and did not marry one of his own countrywomen. The explanation is obvious.

"Once his jealousy was aroused, the cruelty of his nature came out; and once the innocent woman knew that she was suspected, her better feelings were outraged. She was so true, that she hated the man who could

believe her false; and in one of those wild freaks to which women are partial, she heaped up coals of fire, and bade her innocent brother come and act his part under more suspicious circumstances than ever. Poor thing! she had friends as well as enemies; and one night, when she had arranged a settlement for her brother, and had ordered him back to England, with his pockets lined, and an excellent start in life again, she received a note, scribbled in pencil:

"'For God's sake, be cautious; your husband is watching.'

"She laughed a scornful laugh of triumph, and scattered the fragments of the note upon the floor, and then, as they were parting possibly for many years, she led her brother to the door of her apartment.

"She saw a dark shadow in the doorway opposite, and knew it must be her husband.

Her heart was steeled and nerved for the encounter, and she hated the man for playing the spy upon her. A sudden inspiration came upon her.

"'Kiss me, Maurice,' she said.

"Her brother kissed her, and wondered at the embrace that tightened about his neck.

"'Good night, dear.'

"'Good night.'

"What followed was the work of an instant. There was a loud scream of hatred that rang through the house, and the young brother, taken unawares, was hurled headlong down the stairs. The wife fled back.

Without another word the husband rushed into the apartment like a madman. He did not wait for explanation, or ask it. His curses were so terrible, that the wife's blood chilled in her very veins. Her love died out under the fury of his accusations, and she laughed, pale and unmoved, at his bloodless face and quivering fingers.

"It was the last sound heard in the tall Parisian house that night; for, when the servants returned, they found their mistress stabbed to the heart with the dagger she had once worn as Juliet. Next day her husband's body was fished up from the Seine! The day after, the suicide and the murdered woman were side by side in the Morgue."

Old Tom looked at me, and there were tears in his eyes. He kissed the picture reverently, and put it back in its corner again. I looked astonished; and then he spoke:

"It was the only time I was ever in Paris, and it will be the last. I went to claim what belonged to me. She was my sister.

"Bless you, sir," said old Tom, "Othello was not the only one! I could tell you scores of tragedies in our profession that arose out of jealousy. It is as useful a passion for dramatic purposes as love, and that no author can do without, let him try ever so hard."

* * * * *

It was Christmas-time, and all was going on merrily at the theatres. Managers were nervously active, scene-painters worn out with fatigue and anxiety, stages crowded with neat girls and irrepressible children; stage directors, loud of tongue but kind of heart, vowing vengeance one minute, and patting a child on the head the next—flouncing about with hands in pockets, and declaring, "It shall be done if I have to stay here all night, so there!" and immediately afterwards dismissing some section of giggling girls with a smile and a "There! that will do, my dears! Go to bed!"

For was it not within a week of Boxing Night, that great feast-day in the Calendar of the Stage, when untold blessings are told out to thousands of honest and hard-working households by what I shall ever call the

charity of Christmas playgoing? At other times of the year there are signs of weariness and fatigue at the close of a series of rehearsals. Repetition induces a kind of contempt for the subject. But not at Christmas on the eve of the pantomime. Dear me, what a noise and a chattering! The children look upon the stage as a huge playground, have games at hide-and-seek behind the wings, lose themselves in mysterious cellars, and get into endless scrapes. The girls gather into knots and discuss their dress, longing for the time when they will exchange their poor, worn, little gowns for the gorgeous vestments of the princes and princesses of imaginative extravaganza; and everyone seems exhilarated with the thought that "treasury" will come very soon, and that unless something very unforeseen and unexpected occurs, there will be a comfortable and convenient income for six or seven weeks at least. It is the fashion nowadays to sneer at our good old-fashioned Christmas amusement, and there is an inclination to take sides against it, and to veneer it over with the cheap superciliousness that is the stock-in-trade of the Brummagem critic and the "second-hand gentleman"; but many of us would be sorry to deprive the children of their innocent sport, or to abolish, without ample reflection, one branch of the merry and healthy trade of pleasure.

For the first time for six-and-twenty years Tom Porter was not at his post at the theatre. The old faces came to the door again, but they were not greeted by his cheery countenance. Where was old Tom? This was the question from the clown to the columbine. They all liked the good fellow, and as they are the most conservative of people, these artists, it did not seem like old times to come to work at Christmas, and see a new guardian at the stage door.

But disappointment yielded to sympathetic regret when it was whispered about that Tom Porter was very ill. He had worked on through a neglected cold, and he was very bad—so somebody said who had heard it from somebody else. Of late years there had been a mystery about the old man. No one knew exactly where he lived, and he showed an obstinate disinclination to tell them.

He was to all intents and purposes the last of his race. The wife had died long ago. The sons had emigrated, and his favourite daughter, married now, had gone to join her brother in Australia, and so, when Tom Porter took ill, as they say, he found for the first time in his life that he was alone in the world. This is a terrible moment in the life of a solitary man. His occupation at the theatre gave him friends, amusement, and distraction. He only came home to sleep, and got to work again, and hardly perceived the misery of isolation; but when he had to lower his flag, and was compelled to keep to his bed, it was positive pain for a man of his disposition to look round the empty room and find solitude.

Gaiety, excitement, business, conversation, stories, and anecdotes had been the food of his daily life, and now, suddenly and unexpectedly, he knew that he was very ill, and was too proud to tax the claims of friendship.

There were hundreds of good men and women—for they are generous, self-sacrificing, self-denying, and most human in this great profession—who would have come and nursed the old man, but he preferred to go back to his hole and die without bothering a soul.

But he sent for me all the same. He denied himself to all his old friends, he refused to let them know in what corner of this London world he was passing away, but

one night I received a note scribbled in pencil, that said, "Come and see the old man, like a good friend. He is very bad and lonely."

I followed the direction, and made for a top floor in a little cul-de-sac out of Great Ormond Street. I knocked at the door, and a faint voice answered me. There he lay, the good old fellow, and I could see that the pain of death was on his face.

All was perfectly neat and in order; nothing had been neglected, but here he was in this silent upper room with nothing to console him but the dull roar of distant London.

"I am going fast, old friend," he said. "I know it, I feel it. Let the doctors do what they will, I know I am going home. But, oh, do take me away from here. They are very kind, and charitable, and attentive, but they are strangers, and this silence is horrible. I want some excitement and noise. I'd sooner be in a hospital where I could hear some one talk, or in a workhouse to listen to a grumble; but oh, these days and nights without a word, I cannot endure it."

I promised I would have him removed where he would be happier; but I knew the end was very near. His breath came rapidly, and he looked at me with that searching, piercing gaze that means the end.

All on a sudden he lifted himself up with some strange nervous power and pulled a book from under the pillow.

"Look here," he said, "this was the work of my life."

"I loved the old theatre, and it was my amusement to jot down all I heard when I got home. Here they all are, scraps, anecdotes, stories, all sorts of odds and ends. If I lived two hundred years I never could get to the end of all I have heard at one place or another. I never showed it to any one but you, but I thought you might get something out of it that would make them laugh—yes, and perhaps make them cry. You love the stage, and I like you for it—besides, bless you, you saved my girl."

I protested.

"Don't say another word—you saved my girl; and where is she now? Why doesn't she come to her old father, who is alone—so terribly alone."

He was getting weaker now as he handed me the book of manuscript and newspaper cuttings, but he touched it tenderly till the last. It seemed as if he were parting from a dear friend.

The breathing came harder than before, and I took his hand. A nervous thrill of satisfaction went through his body as our hands touched, for though I was a stranger, still he looked on me as a friend.

"I shall not die alone now," he said. "God bless you for coming to the old man."

He seemed asleep, but as I bent over him he was murmuring, "Take care of the book, it is yours—remember, yours."

"What shall I call it, Tom?" I whispered.

His face lighted up for the last time, as he murmured very faintly, "The Stage Door."

The rest was silence.

THE BROKEN NECKLACE: A LOVE STORY.

BY MARIE BANCROFT.



YEARS ago, in a small country theatre, where my father was engaged, I was considered by the manager a very clever child, and in children's parts had become a pet with the au-

dience. Attractions must have been at a very low ebb when the manager conceived the idea of my playing "Juliet." I am thankful that such things do not occur now. Happy children! and happier public!

I was a pale, thin, delicate-looking child, and very tall for my age, being only thirteen, although announced in the bills as twelve. Every one thought at that time that I should, if I lived, be a remarkably fine woman, but since playing "Juliet" on that memorable first occasion I have not grown an inch, and sometimes think that my tragic efforts gave as great a shock to my system as to my audience.

Often on my way to and from our rehearsals, when I had time to loiter, I stopped at a window in the little High Street, and longingly looked at a necklace of pearl beads, in three rows, marked five shillings—a fortune to me then. I saved until I had half-a-

crown, and then tried to induce the shopman to let me have it for that price; but I failed. My father promised to buy me the treasure if I would be very good, and study "Juliet." How readily I said "Yes," for the labour of learning the words and being taught by my mother how to speak them, seemed light indeed compared with the joy of possessing those little pearl beads.

The night arrived for the "great dramatic event" (*vide* advertisements). My mother could scarcely dress me, her hands trembled so. I could not help wondering why she should be so anxious. I was not. I was of that happy age that knows no responsibility. I had on a pretty white dress, trimmed with narrow silver lace, my hair hanging in large waves over my shoulders, and best adornment of all was my beautiful pearl necklace. Oh! how every one would envy me those beads.

All went well until the fourth act, when, in throwing my head back to drink the poison, my long train, which I wore for the first time in my life, and which had been a great anxiety to me all through the play, got entangled in my feet, and in the effort to save myself from falling, my necklace gave way, and the beads were scattered about in all directions. I looked scared for a moment; but when I fully realized that it was broken, I fell to crying so bitterly that I thought my heart would break too. I sank on to the couch sobbing piteously. The audience thought this a good piece of acting, and gave me great applause.

Nothing in the shape of fond persuasions,

promises, threats, or arguments would induce me to go on for the last act—nothing but the restored necklace, one row of which was broken, and the beads scattered all over the stage. At length, my poor mother, who was almost wild with despair, promised me a new one if I would only finish the part.

So, in the greatest grief, and with stifled sobs, I went through the last act. When I fell on Romeo's body there was great applause, but in the middle of Friar Laurence's last speech I saw some of my beads lying close to his feet. His treading upon them seemed imminent, so I got up and rescued them, and then lay down again. Of course, the rest of Friar Laurence's speech was not heard, and the curtain fell amidst loud laughter. I had a good scolding from father, mother, and manager, who hoped that when I again played Juliet I should think more of the part than of the ornaments.

As we were leaving the theatre, my eyes swollen from crying over the injured necklace, a gentleman who had witnessed the performance and the scene stepped up to us, and said, "I hope you will pardon me for speaking to you; my name is Captain —. Let me tell you how much I have been impressed by your little daughter's acting as Juliet; it really was, for so young an actress, very remarkable. Take care of her, sir, there is a bright career before her. Good night. Good night, little one!" He shook my hand, and asked me if I would give him the remnant of my broken necklace, which I had so carefully rescued from destruction when supposed to be dead. I trembled at the thought of parting with it; but my mother whispered to me, "I am going to buy you another." So I gave it. On our way home we talked of nothing else—my father dwelling

on the criticism, and I on the final disappearance of my necklace.

For many and many a night I quite looked for my "prophet," but he had gone as mysteriously as he had come. Often on our way home I have said, "We have never seen that kind gentleman since, father, and, though I only saw him once, I seem to miss him somehow; will his words ever come true, I wonder?"

About two years after that, we joined the company of the Bristol Theatre, where I played almost every class of part that ever was written; one night I appeared as Ophelia, owing to the illness of the leading lady. I felt that I had made a success, and was leaving the theatre with my mother, who instructed me in every part I played, talking to her, and feeling very happy, when who should step up to us, but my "prophet." We both recognized him at once. I was delighted, my mother gratified, and so far as circumstances would permit, she showed that his criticism and kind compliments were most acceptable two years ago, but, having some considerable knowledge of the world, she feared that his admiration of me as a child, *might* grow into something more serious, and she therefore did not receive him with that warmth she otherwise might have done. He said, "Well, little one, you see I was right, you are going up the ladder, step by step; mark my words, the next one will be London."

My heart jumped at the sight of this man; there was a kind of mystery about him, he seemed to be mixed up with my life somehow, and whatever part of importance I played, I always thought of him and of his kind words. He showed me the string of pearls, and said, "You see how I have treasured these. I don't intend to part with

them. I shall never give them back to you unless you ask me for them." How different were my feelings for those pearls now; it seemed like taking away my heart when he first asked me for them, and how, unknown to myself, he had taken away my heart.

Every night during his short stay he sat in a corner of the dress circle, and at the end of the play would show me the pearl beads; he would wait sometimes outside the stage door, just to press my hand and say, "Good-night, little one;" he had not time to say more, for my mother used to sit at the window of our lodgings, which were opposite, to see me come home.

I was now in love for the very first time in my life. How everything else in the whole world suddenly dwindled into nothing. Father, mother, sisters, theatres, acting—all seemed to be shut out by a curtain, and only one being was in view. There was nothing in this man to attract a girl of my age: he was not young, not what is called good-looking, and was poor; but what was all this to me? I argued with myself that all the nicest people were poor, and I didn't care; but I had never had an opportunity of telling him all this, for my mother had declined to encourage his visits, and so he kept away, and never tried to see me, except for one moment to say "Good night."

One night I received a note from him, only a few lines, saying, "Good-bye, little one. I wonder if we shall ever meet again. I shall never part with your pearls. I love you, little one. I wish you loved me, but it is better for you that you should not." This was the first opportunity he had ever given me of telling him how much I loved him, and I was resolved to take it.

I gave the note to my mother, and implored her to let me see him. She refused,

saying I was a silly girl. I fancy she said a fool, but I was too agitated to remember.

"How can you think seriously of such a mysterious person?" Mysterious! she would not give him a chance of being anything else. "Surely," she continued, "you cannot wish to destroy all your professional prospects. Let me hear no more of this nonsense. Thank goodness he is gone, and you will forget him in a few days."

"Forget him! and in a few days! Oh, mother!" I knew his address in Ireland, and after vainly trying to follow my mother's counsel, I wrote to him saying that I loved him more than anything else in the world, and that if he really cared for me as much, I would run away, and go to him; that if I did not marry him I would marry no one else; that I could not study, that I could do nothing but think of him. He replied that it seemed hard to take me from a profession in which I was destined to shine—that he should for ever reproach himself if I regretted, when too late, the step I had taken—that his love and empty pockets would be but a miserable return for the sacrifice I should make. He begged me to reflect. I did, and the more I reflected the more determined I became, and I told him so. He answered that he would not fight with his feelings any longer; that he was sure, when once we were married, my mother would soon forgive us.

And so it came about that I was to start on a certain day. All was settled. I was to receive the final letter with instructions, and the money for my journey. I thought the day would never come. Time seemed to creep and not to fly. But as the day drew nearer and nearer, my heart, which had been so light and joyful, began to beat with a heavier thud. There was a kind of fear—

a wish to run away from myself, for I felt afraid of myself—my head and my heart began to argue.

On the night before I was to leave my home, I returned from my work at the theatre. I found my mother waiting supper for me as usual. I could not eat, I was nervous and thoughtful. My mother asked me if I was ill, or had I been annoyed at the theatre? I shook my head. I could not trust myself to speak. When she kissed me and said, "Good-night, God bless you!" I whispered to myself, "Will He bless me to-morrow?" The words fell from her lips like a reproach, for although she said them to me every night, they never seemed to mean so much before—they never set me thinking as they did that night.

When I was alone in my little bed-room, I fell on my knees and prayed to God to help me and to guide me, for my heart was full of doubt. I felt how I was deceiving my dear mother, to whom I owed everything—who had taught me, who had worked for me, and who was now dependent upon me. If I went away, what would become of her and my young-sisters, for my father's health was getting worse and worse. Oh! how I wept and prayed that night! I implored God to help me in my trouble and to give me some warning in my dreams. I cried myself to sleep but awoke several times. I heard the church-bell toll four, six, and eight. Still no warning dream. I tried to think that perhaps my going would be for the best, or I should have surely dreamt something, and I felt a little happier as I lay thinking. Half-past eight was the post time, and I had told the servant to bring any letters there might be for me to my room.

The half-hour struck. I heard the post-man's knock. My heart seemed to stop

beating. I heard the girl on the stairs. I could scarcely breathe. A knock at the door. This was the final letter. I jumped out of bed, and as I crossed the room to open the door, a voice, as if in great haste, said quickly, "Don't go."

God alone knows what my feelings were at that moment. Never—never, to my dying day, shall I forget it. A thrill, first of awe and terror, then of thankfulness, came over me. I fell on my knees, and said, "I won't go." The servant impatiently pushed the letter under the door. I opened it. There were the final instructions—how he would meet me on the journey, and the money for my expenses. I threw on my dressing-gown, sat down, and wrote these words—"Don't expect me, I cannot go. I have changed my mind." I enclosed the money, and sent the letter to the post. I gave a sigh of relief, lay down on the bed, and cried bitterly.

One morning, during breakfast, a few weeks later, my mother (who up to this time knew nothing of my little story) handed me the newspaper, and with a smile of satisfaction pointed to the marriage column. He had married! I threw my arms around my mother's neck, had a good cry, and told her everything.

The words of my "prophet" were fulfilled, and some two or three years later I was acting in a London theatre. Whenever I made a success, I thought of his kind words when I first saw him, and I remembered how I had grown to love him at last.

One day I was walking slowly up Regent Street, when I stopped, without knowing why, at the Carrara marble works. Serious thoughts came over me as I contemplated the headstones and monuments, and as I turned from them with a sigh, a voice by my side said, in a low tone, "Well, my faithless

little one." I turned, and saw my "prophet." My first instinct was to run away, but my legs would not move.

"You see," he said, "what came of your suddenly changing your mind, I revenged myself and got married. How cruel you were!" He told me that he had married a rich widow, that he proposed, was accepted, and was married within a month from my refusal. After thinking to myself that widows lost no time in settling their affairs, I told him the story of my warning, and he seemed much impressed by it. He answered, "It was, I am sure, a timely warning, for we should have been very poor, and consequently very miserable. It would have been a dreary life for you, and much too big a sacrifice, with all your bright prospects. I am now a widower, with one little child. My wife died a year after our marriage. I am rich now, and can return to my old young love. I wonder if my little Juliet loves me still as much as she said she did?" Yes, I did, but I would not say so. I was afraid to hope again, so I said, "You had better not see me any more; you will soon forget me." He replied, "Never, until I am under one of those," pointing to the headstones in the window. A cold chill ran through me as he said those words.

He was under orders to sail for India the following week, so no time was to be lost. He called on my mother, and asked her consent to our corresponding and to our marrying on his return to England, which would be in a year, providing she consented. My mother hesitated, but after tears and entreaties from me, and with the hope that he would marry a black woman, or that I should forget him, or that something would happen to keep him in India, she reluctantly consented. The fates seemed to will it this time, and so I was very happy again.

The day came to say good-bye. He showed me the pearl necklace, saying, "You see how I have guarded it. I will never part with it; it seems to have linked our two lives together." I looked at the broken beads, and all the old times came back to me. There was my necklace just as I had left it, with two rows complete, and the third partly gone; and there was the knot which I had made to prevent the other beads from falling off.

I somehow wished there had been no broken link. I had begun to feel rather superstitious now about our courtship.

I was to have a letter from him by every mail. Every mail brought me one, full of love and kind words. No one ever seemed to speak such words as he did, they were so good and honest. I always felt that I could trust him, and that is why I loved him.

Six months passed—seven, eight, and nine—and every mail brought me my letter. How anxiously I looked for his handwriting!—I counted the days and hours. At last, the day came, but no letter; the next mail arrived, and the next, but still no letter. What could it mean? My mother, smiling, said, "Ah, my child, the old, old story; and I am not sorry." "After a few days' reflection, I began to think that she was right, and that I had been a fool; but I was very unhappy. He had seemed to be my guiding star ever since I was a little girl, and all my first and purest love was his. Oh, it was dreadful to bear!

One day, very shortly after his third letter was due, I was again in Regent Street, and thought of the day I had met him there. I was very sad and miserable, but still could not help clinging to the hope of seeing him again, and that all would be explained. He

had been so frank and honest, I could not help trusting to his honour. Perhaps he was coming home to surprise me. As I approached the Carrara marble works, I thought how strange it would be if I met him there again. I hurried to the place, with a kind of superstitious feeling—having met him there so strangely before, I should, perhaps, as strangely meet him there again. I stopped at the old spot, waited, looked about—no, not there! Ah! I remembered, I was looking in at the window when he came; I will do so again. I looked in at the window,

and there I saw a large white headstone, with these words:

Sacred to the Memory of
CAPTAIN —,
WHO DIED SUDDENLY, AT KURRACHEE,
&c., &c.

How I got home, I know not. I found my mother in tears, reading a letter which she had received from his dearest friend, who had found my letters among his papers. He had died soon after writing to me for the last time, and my little pearl necklace was buried with him.

MY FIRST "READING."

By HENRY IRVING.



MANY years ago (I think it was in the autumn of 1858), I made an ambitious appeal to the public which I don't suppose anybody remembers but myself. I had at that time been about two years upon the stage, and was fulfilling my first engagement at Edinburgh. Like all young men, I was full of hope, and looked forward buoyantly to the time when I should leave the bottom rung of the ladder far below me. The weeks rolled on, however, and my name continued to occupy a

useful but obscure position in the playbill, and nothing occurred to suggest to the manager the propriety of doubling my salary, although he took care to assure me that I was "made to rise." It may be mentioned that I was then receiving thirty shillings per week, which was the usual remuneration for what is termed "juvenile lead."

At last a brilliant idea occurred to me. It happened to be vacation time—"preaching week," as it is called in Scotland—and it struck me that I might turn my leisure to account by giving a reading. I imparted this project to another member of the company, who entered into it with enthusiasm. He, too, was young and ambitious. It was the business aspect of the enterprise which fired his imagination, it was the artistic aim that excited mine. When I promised him half the profits, but not before, he had a vision of the excited crowd surging round the doors, of his characteristic energy in keeping them back with one hand and taking the

money with the other ; and afterwards, of the bags of coin neatly tied and carefully accounted for, according to some admirable system of book-keeping by double entry. This was enough for me, and I appointed him to the very responsible position of manager, and we went about feeling a deep compassion for people whose fortunes were not, like ours, on the point of being made.

Having arranged all the financial details, we came to the secondary but inevitable question—Where was the reading to be given ? It would scarcely do in Edinburgh ; the public there had too many other matters to think about. Linlithgow was a likely place. Nothing very exciting had occurred in Linlithgow since the Regent Murray was shot by Hamilton of Bothwell Haugh. The old town was probably weary of that subject now, and would be grateful to us for cutting out the Regent Murray with a much superior sensation. My friend the manager accordingly paid several visits to Linlithgow, engaged the Town Hall, ordered the posters, and came back every time full of confidence. Meanwhile, I was absorbed in "The Lady of Lyons," which, being the play that most charmed the fancy of a young actor, I had decided to read ; and day after day, perched on Arthur's Seat, I worked myself into a romantic fever, with which I had little doubt I should inoculate the good people of Linlithgow.

The day came which was to make or mar us quite, and we arrived at Linlithgow in high spirits. I felt a thrill of pride at seeing my name for the first time in big capitals on the posters, which announced that at "eight o'clock precisely Mr. Henry Irving would read 'The Lady of Lyons.'" This was highly satisfactory, and gave us an excellent appetite for a frugal tea. At the hotel we eagerly questioned our waiter as to the probability of there being a great rush. He pon-

dered some time, as if calculating the number of people who had personally assured him of their determination to be present ; but we could get no other answer out of him than "Nane can tell." Did he think there would be fifty people there ? "Nane can tell." Did he think that the throng would be so great that the Provost would have to be summoned to keep order ? Even this audacious proposition did not induce him to commit himself, and we were left to infer that, in his opinion, it was not at all unlikely.

Eight o'clock drew near, and we sallied out to survey the scene of operations. The crowd had not yet begun to collect in front of the Town Hall, and the man who had undertaken to be there with the key was not visible. As it was getting late, and we were afraid of keeping the public waiting in the chill air, we went in search of the doorkeeper. He was quietly reposing in the bosom of his family, and to our remonstrance replied, "Ou, ay, the reading ! I forgot all about it." This was not inspiring, but we put it down to harmless ignorance. It was not to be expected that a man who looked after the Town Hall key would feel much interest in "The Lady of Lyons."

The door was opened, the gas was lighted, and my manager made the most elaborate preparations for taking the money. He had even provided himself with change, in case some opulent citizen of Linlithgow should come with nothing less than a sovereign. While he was thus energetically applying himself to business, I was strolling like a casual spectator on the other side of the street, taking some last feverish glances at the play, and anxiously watching for the first symptoms of "the rush."

The time wore on. The town clock struck eight, and still there was no sign of "the rush." The manager mournfully counted and

recounted the change for that sovereign. Half-past eight, and not a soul to be seen—not even a small boy! It was clear that nobody intended to come, and that the Regent Murray was to have the best of it after all. I could not read “The Lady of Lyons” to an audience consisting of the manager, with a face as long as two tragedies, so there was nothing for it but to beat a retreat. No one came out even to witness our discomfiture. Linlithgow could not have taken the trouble to study the posters, which now seemed such horrid mockeries in our eyes. I don’t think either of us could for some time afterwards read any announcement concerning “eight o’clock precisely” without emotion.

We managed to scrape together enough money to pay the expenses, which operation was a sore trial to my speculative manager, and a pretty severe tax upon the emoluments of the “juvenile lead.” As for Linlithgow, we voted it a dull place, still wrapped in mediæval slumber, and therefore insensible to the charms of the poetic drama, and to youthful aspirations after glory. We returned to Edinburgh the same night, and on the journey, by way of showing that I was not at all cast down, I favoured my manager with selections from the play, which he good-humouredly tolerated, though there was a sadness in his smile which touched my sensitive mind with compassion.

This incident was vividly revived last year, as I passed through Linlithgow on my way from Edinburgh to Glasgow, in which cities I gave, in conjunction with my friend Toole, two readings on behalf of the sufferers by the bank failure, which produced a large sum of money. My companion in the Linlithgow expedition was Mr. Edward Saker—now one of the most popular managers in the provinces.

RANDOM RECOLLECTIONS.

BY WALTER LACY.



AS a most indolent medical student of some twenty summers, rising in the afternoon, and making my main meal at midnight, on Mondays and Wednesdays at Offley's, Tuesdays and Fridays at the Cider Cellars, and Thursdays and Saturdays at the Coal Hole, I used to vary my work in the dissecting-room with some speech I had heard the previous night at the play, such as—"Ye crags and peaks, I am with you once again," after Macready, in "William Tell"; or, "Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by the sun of York," after the grand Edmund Kean, to see whom I have run breathless up the stairs of the lower gallery of the T. R. Drury Lane, or into the pit, according to the contents of my purse.

About this period an incident occurred worth mentioning, regarding the *début*, in private, of a boy who had been taken to see Edmund Kean. He was destined to be a great actor this curly little child. I received, with other students of the "London Hospital," a ticket for a juvenile amateur performance of "Richard the Third," and of course busied myself behind the

scenes—probably painting the moustache of some of the small actors. The little Richard, with his black wig and scarlet dress, made a miniature resemblance of the great actor, and seemed to have imbibed that wonderful combination of physical impulse and inspiration that characterized the original, especially in the detonating and explosive power. The child's mamma was a little fairy-like creature, at whose house I had previously seen him with his own flaxen ringlets; half asleep, like a Blenheim dog, on the skirts of her velvet gown.

Many years after I had been playing at the Princess's, under Mr. Maddox's management, it was my wont, when out of work, to stroll from my house, near "The Angel," at Islington, down to the Grecian Saloon, being specially attracted by the clever comedian, Mr. Robson; and on one occasion I asked a little lady, sitting in front of me, to lend me her playbill; she turned round and showed, to my astonishment, the face of the mother of the boy who had made his infant bow as Richard III. "Good gracious!" exclaimed I. "Mrs. ——" "Ah!" said she, "what is my name?" "I really can't remember exactly," I replied; "but it is a short one—Biffin, or Tiffin, or something like that." As she would not enlighten me, I asked her what had become of her infant prodigy. "That is he," she replied, "now singing the 'Country Fair.' Robson is his stage name."

Years rolled on, and when I was playing Count Pepinelli, in "Marco Spada," during Charles Kean's management at the Princess's, Robson was playing the same part at the Olympic, and two notes crossed in the post.

"DEAR ROBSON,—I am out of the bill

on Wednesday, and should like to see your Pepinelli.—Yours, etc.,

"WALTER LACY."

"DEAR LACY,—I am free after the first piece, Friday, and want to see you in Pepinelli.—Yours, etc.,

"F. ROBSON."

On a later occasion, while playing Jeremy Diddler, at Drury Lane, Mr. Chester (rehearsing Fainwood), addressed me thus, "You don't remember me, Mr. Lacy. I played Buckingham, when a boy, at the Assembly Rooms, in Mile End." I shook hands, and asked him what Robson's patronymic was. "Button," was the reply; "who drew his inspiration from the grand Edmund Kean."

I made my own first bow as Tressel, in "Richard the Third," at the Pavilion Theatre, for the benefit of a popular East-End tragedian, who ended life sadly, committing suicide some twenty years after, while engaged as a poorly-paid law copyist in Chancery Lane.

My second attempt was at the Garrick Theatre, as Rambleton, in "Intrigue; or the Bath Road." I then began seriously to brush up my anatomy, but without much credit, for Mr. Headington, the celebrated surgeon (President of the College), who used to invite his pupils to an annual dinner at his house, questioned them one after the other as to their progress; but when my turn came, he addressed me thus: "Now, then! my Othello friend! give us a speech from Shakspeare."

One day—big with fate—Wilmott, the Anatomical Theatre beadle, came into the dissecting-room and informed me that a gentleman in a hackney-carriage wanted to speak to me.

The occupant of the hackney-carriage, evidently a Yankee, addressed me thus—

"Are you the young gentleman that wants to act?"

I replied, drawing myself up, "I have acted both in tragedy and comedy" (making the most of "Tressel" and "Rambleton").

"Well," said the American, "my wife, that's Madame Celeste, is just going to play the 'French Spy,' and we want a young actor to play her lover, Major Lafont."

"I'm ready," said I, and springing into the coach was conveyed to the Tottenham Street Theatre, then the Queen's; where I was introduced to a committee of actors, and forthwith engaged at a nominal salary of two guineas, under the management of Macfarren, father to my present Principal at the Royal Academy of Music, where I have been the Professor of Elocution sixteen years last Christmas. The parts played by me at shortest notice, were the said French Major; Selbourne, in "A Roland for an Oliver;" and Baron Longville, in the "Foundling of the Forest," which last part was presented to me by Haynes—the author of the "French Spy," who played under the name of Norton—at four o'clock in the afternoon, with an urgent request that I would oblige the company by playing the same night. In my ignorance and delight at being among them, I went without a moment's delay into an adjoining public-house, kept by Perkins, a retired prize-fighter, ordered some tea, with eggs and bacon, and set to at the words, getting through the first part of the performance comfortably enough, when I became confused, and was pushed about into the various situations, and prompted through the remainder of the piece. The company being on the sharing system, my first Saturday yielded me exactly half-a-crown (a magnificent sum), which Dillon, the father of the popular tragedian, made me instantly melt

in beer, to pay my footing on the boards to the thirsty company. As no "Ghost" walked (that is, there was no treasury), the following Saturday, a meeting was called, and Mr. Macfarren, with a nice regard to the claims of his company, announced that we were at liberty to take ticket nights, waiving his right to half the receipts, by which liberal concession my pocket was soon replenished; moreover, as some of my fellow medical students expressed regret at not being made aware of my night, I speculated further by taking the "Sans Souci" Theatre in Leicester Street, now part of Russell's Furniture Warehouse, in Leicester Square, for which I paid Smythson, the lessee, five guineas, and played Jaffier, in "Venice Preserved." I shall never forget with what elation I trod the boards of that little private theatre, with its pretty portico, facing the Leicester Hotel, in a black velvet dress, and sable plumes, the stage being classically covered with green cloth, while the orchestra played a couple of overtures, and was about commencing a third, when The Belvidera, to my great relief, arrived from York. She was a ladylike creature of some experience, and a fine figure of a woman, who kept me in the right positions, notwithstanding the absence of rehearsal, and managed the embraces with delightful refinement. An amateur friend, Mr. Romford, a magnificent-looking man, played Pi  re, and the following week took the theatre on his own account, playing Hastings to my Young Marlowe, in "She Stoops to Conquer." During the early part of the performance of Goldsmith's glorious comedy, a droll, though somewhat sad, incident occurred.

An old actor, named Southey (brother of the Laureate), whose lean figure and threadbare snuff-brown great-coat, and light wig,

reminded me of Sir Walter Scott's Peter Peebles, consented to play Old Hardcastle for five shillings, on condition that the tankard, which Diggory brings on, should be filled according to his prescription, to which my friend Romford readily assented, and consequently the "cup" of egg-wine and spice, regardless of expense, was prepared at the Leicester Hotel opposite, and sent over in a handsome silver flagon; but when Diggory brought it on and placed it in the hands of Southey, who was to have the first pull at it, his gaze of horror, when he lifted the lid, spoke for itself. The poor man let the lid fall on the empty flagon and fairly wept. The carpenters, smelling the warm spiced cup, could not resist the temptation, and passing it from hand to hand had drunk every drop of the precious liquor. I doubt if ever acting was so natural as Old Hardcastle's surprise and horror, with which we sympathized fully, as we were to be sharers in the delicious drink.

Having made the plunge, I looked out seriously for an engagement. A business friend of my father introduced me to John Cooper, who was living in the drawing-room, over his varnish warehouse, now Bacon's Hotel, in Great Queen Street, Long Acre. The actor, in a flowered dressing-gown, was busy studying for the Haymarket, the work in which theatre he called "galley slavery." Being asked if I could recite anything, I stated that I had learned a speech of William Tell's, and as he doubted if he had a book of that play, I said, eagerly, "I've got one in my pocket."

"Pocket, sir," said John Cooper, sternly, "*not* pocket."

This was my first lesson in elocution, which has since served me well. The interview resulted in a letter of recommendation

to the popular manager and celebrated actor, Mr. William Murray, of the T. R. Edinburgh, where I made my first bow in the country, as Count Montalban, in the comedy of the "Honeymoon," and having achieved the years allotted to man, after half a century of work, amidst much sunshine sprinkled with tears, that only seemed to have slaked the love of life and made it brighter, I am now happily fighting under the flag of the popular manager, and celebrated actor, Henry Irving, in mutual friendship and esteem. And, I thank God, in good health and fullest enjoyment of life!

An incident occurs to my mind, chiming in with original sing-song shops, where our merry midnight meals were made, although with an earlier appetite, we did the steak, chop, poached egg, or Welsh rabbit, with the accompanying pint of draught stout, at the "Rainbow," or "Cock," celebrated by the laureate of the present day, in his wonderful "Will Waterhouse."

Now, in those jolly days, before vocal music had advanced so far that for the most part the sweet singers gallop quite out of hearing of the words, when John Braham sang, with as distinct regard to the libretto as John Kemble gave to the language of Shakespeare, each tavern had its special attraction. The Cider Cellars claimed precedence for glees. Somers, Wollidge, and Robinson, with pure throats, impervious to atmospheric influence, would enjoy a rump steak and stout, and then with a bowl of steaming punch before them, would remove the clay pipe from the lips, and sing "Mynheer Vandunck," "The Darby Ram," and "Lady of Beauty, Away, Away." Going together with the force of a cataract, being fed on British beef, and pulling up with startling suddenness, they would deal out notes

like softest falling waters, as delicate as the dewdrop that "lies on the rose on a summer's morning;" but the incident mentioned had reference to Offley's, in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, afterwards the house, for a time, of the Fielding Club, where Thackeray and the bright beings of literature and art solaced themselves before its establishment in Maiden Lane.

The crack singer at Offley's was a stylish young man, yclept "Appleyard," who enchanted the night with graceful and delicious ballads, and woe to the waiter who had the temerity to enter the room with "poached egg" or kidneys while Mr. Appleyard was singing.

Many years rolled on, until I had long merged from a medical student into a mature specimen of Shakespeare's "poor player," and was being rubbed down like a young horse after acting Henry VIII. for the hundredth time, the vigorous morrice dance being encored, in which it was my delight to lead out the dainty and classic Miss Heath, now Mrs. Wilson Barrett, who enacted Ann Bullen. The cue for the band under Jolly Jack Hatton, being, "Let the Music Knock it." Having thrown aside the sheepskin paddings of bluff King Hal, and put on dry underclothes, my dresser, as usual, going across to the "Wheatsheaf" tavern for a sandwich and some bitter beer, I addressed a solitary chorus-man, who sat at the end of the long room, in which I dressed. By the way, the incident I am about to relate could not have occurred during the run of "Henry

the Eighth," in Charles Kean's time. My dressing-room, at that time, was a small square one, in which Harley, Meadows, and James Vining also dressed. It evidently was in the previous Maddox management, when I often played in three and four pieces a night. Anyhow, I invited the amiable chorus-man to have some drink, and a brandy-and-soda was brought for him. We chatted pleasantly, especially about the days when I so much enjoyed those notes Ambrosian at the Cider Cellars and Coal Hole, down to the time when George Stansbury and Paul Bedford did their duets at Evans's Hotel in Covent Garden. But when I remarked that Appleyard was the most popular ballad-singer, the chorus-man asked me if I should remember the voice again if I heard it. I replied, "Certainly I should;" when in somewhat tremulous, but sweet tones, he sang a verse of Appleyard's favourite ballad, "Alice Gray."

"Why, you are Appleyard!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," he said, "that was my name at Offley's, when I sang with such confidence and applause, but some of my patrons having induced me to acquire a knowledge of music, I lost my nerve as soon as I knew what I was about, and could no longer command a position."

This most amiable and respected gentleman was the father of two beautiful and accomplished actresses, not unknown to fame. The late Mr. Ranøe afterwards became prompter at the Italian Opera, and was the best of good fellows.



JOHN CAMPBELL: A TRUE STORY OF A BENEFIT:

BY HENRY NEVILLE.



IN the apocryphal "good old times of the drama," necessity created many monsters. The "Monster Benefit" was one, and it really meant much more than it does in these rapid times of railway and telegraphy. A benefit often paid the arrears of salary, and enabled the poor actor to pay off the obliging butcher, baker, or clear out the brokers, and generally to "hold up his head," as he called it, to carry *him*, and more particularly *his*, to the next town, which, with the difficulties of the coaching days of which I write, appeared so much farther off than now.

The expense and difficulty of postage and transit obliged many a fine actor to wear out his life in the provinces, and come to an obscure, modest grave in some out-of-the-way churchyard; his ability never having asserted itself, never having become, as it were, public property. His genius belonged only to a circuit, not as now, to the whole world. The word Benefit was thoroughly expressive. It was originated and intended to alleviate some of the many—too many—privations

and vexations to which the old actors were too frequently subject.

Vagabond life possessed especial fascination, there was so much *hope* in it. London was the goal to which every one earnestly strove.

The vital, pressing necessity for the particular benefit of which I write, was the honourable discharge of a long account for attendance and physic for a poor little innocent child, afflicted with fever first, then a lingering ailment which kept him in bed, many, many weary months, never to rise again straight and strong as other children.

The Campbells were leaving the town to try their fortune elsewhere; the doctor must be paid, he had been so kind, so patient, so attentive—all the best feelings of these good people's nature were invoked in the discharge of this sacred debt. Had he not saved their child, their only one? They were, beyond expression, grateful to God and the doctor. True, he had never asked for his fees, nor demanded payment for the physic, but perhaps for that very reason they would have parted with their showiest properties—well, even the clothes off their backs, for this interesting debt: indeed, they often discussed how to "raise the wind," and calculated to a nicety how much their scanty effects would produce. At last a benefit was suggested, as affording the readiest and most promising settlement. Our hero had hardly acquired that enviable position in the theatre which entitled him to a benefit; consequently, he would have to depend on an

attractive bill—never hinting at the great necessity which compelled the appeal to the public.

Arrangements were satisfactorily made with the liberal manager, and the benefit was to take place in something less than three weeks. Then came the great question of what to perform to tempt the public. Campbell was only the "walking gentleman" of the establishment, and the leading man had to be consulted. Campbell would have played "Richard the Third" because Edmund Kean had made it popular by his marvellous performance, and nothing seemed easier than to copy him, and create the same effect; but no, the leading man would play Richard, or nothing. "But you *must* play the leading part, John, on your benefit night; it's only right you should," said John's loving little wife. "Besides it's your opportunity; you are clever enough." Of course she thought him clever enough.

Dear soul. "Will he play Iago to your Othello?" capital suggestion? Would he? Yes, he would! with greatest pleasure, especially as Campbell had so short a time to study it, and would have to buy his "props;" and oh, rapture! possibly couldn't buy them, and would have to paint his legs as well as his handsome face, thought the leading man.

Genius never sticks at trifles—obstacles are only things to be overcome; nothing should stop him. John Campbell would play "Othello," and his wife's favourite piece, "Lilian, the Show Girl;" a tragedy and a drama, "for this night only," with "Jump Jim Crow," and a jig in the middle, "By particular desire." But stop! by *whose* desire? for there was a truthfulness in these people which asserted itself even in their business transactions. "Wouldn't it be grand to obtain a patronage? Oh, delightful!" "Under the distinguished

patronage of——" in large letters when we get it, were the printer's instructions.

"I'll ask the Lord of the Manor," said Campbell; "nothing like the fountain-head; and who knows perhaps he might like to see his name in large letters all over the town. Then again, what a service he will render, if he only knew how much we need all that can be done for us; I'm sure he would. A long journey for three of us, one requiring especial accommodation. "Poor darling!" he ejaculates (sadly looking towards the bed at the window), "our petty debts, and that blessed doctor's bill." Just as he was rushing out (everything had to be done with a rush, between this and the benefit night) the little feeble child called to him, and asked why he didn't come to talk and play as he used to do? "I'm so lonely, papa, without you."

"I shall not be long, darling, it will all be over in a fortnight, and then we'll go to such a beautiful place, far away from here, where we shall be so happy, I hope, my pet; so happy, and want no more."

"Why, that's heaven, papa! Shall we go there? I'm so glad! I'll be very patient for a fortnight."

He kissed his boy and went his way, with confident steps and cheerful heart, big with excitement of his benefit preparations and prospects. He reached the great house, as it was called by those who didn't know its right name, and hesitated which of the many bells to pull. At last he pulled one of them, the "Servants'"; he was too modest to claim a pull at the "Visitors'." He came to ask a favour, and there is something chilling in having to ask a favour, to say nothing of the ceremony of being shown in, and all the rest of it. However, he was not shown in; he had not to wait. His lordship had

that morning gone away, and they couldn't tell when he would return—"certainly not for a month, or five weeks." This was a great disappointment to Campbell, there was no time to get his lordship's reply by post, and after all it might be unfavourable. I only say *might*, for hope is always so powerful in aspiring actors; with some the actual is hardly positive enough: they still hope that something might come of it, and it often does.

He retraced his steps, ignoring the disappointment, and utilizing the time by studying his part, to the astonishment of many a wondering native, who listened with horror at the passionate speeches. Campbell became more and more engrossed in his study, and perfectly unconscious of the extraordinary interest he was creating, until at last he found himself roughly arrested by a frantic crowd, who wanted to hurry him off to an asylum as a raving lunatic. He explained, and some friendly person recognizing him, he was liberated.

His wife was, of course, very much amused when he told her his adventure. She thought it was a capital advertisement; in fact, he could not have had a more satisfactory gratuitous advertisement.

But the patronage which was looked upon as the all-important dignity of the occasion, who could he apply to? who was the next best? "Why, the colonel of the regiment quartered here, to be sure." He is, perhaps, better than the other. "Officers are always great patrons of the drama."

The next morning he dressed himself in his best: albeit, his best had seen good service in every modern play for the last three years; but the best is always the best, and must be so respected. At all events, he hastened to the barracks in his best; he sent

in his name, "Campbell," a lucky name, for the colonel was a Scotchman, and knew some Campbells, and liked them. "Good fighting clan." "Show him in." Heavens! he was shown in; he was admitted to the great presence, and couldn't help feeling extremely nervous, for the colonel was a grisly, shock-haired, double-barrelled, hundred-horse-power veteran, whose very presence inspired awe.

"Well, to what am I indebted for this visit, Mr. Campbell?" said he.

Humbly, Campbell revealed himself, and made his request. Now, why should that colonel raise his eyebrows, and twirl his huge muff of a moustache, and hide himself, as it were, behind a barricade of reserve too formidable for the simple occasion?

"Patronage!" growled he; "what for? Why should I bother myself with your affairs?"

"Well, sir," said Campbell, "I was urged to ask because of the great advantage it would be to us, and because we've had hard trials—my wife and I, with an invalid child, and——"

"I hate plays—won't go—nothing to give; show him out!"

And out he went in double-quick time, humbled and abashed, as though he had proposed something too terrible to be tolerated.

This colonel's crust was very thick indeed. No matter. "Wretched, indeed, is the mouse which has only one hole for a refuge. The colonel's not my only refuge; I'll try the captains to-morrow."

The captains were not so easy of access as he had found the colonel; at all events, after waiting an hour, Campbell was taken to two of them—charming fellows, with fair hair and cigarettes—most agreeable—would do anything—get others—fond of a play, especially

funny plays—pretty women, they hoped, by-the-bye. What is the lady's name who desires our patronage?"

"Oh! did I not tell you? I wish it for myself and family."

"By Jove! for yourself; do anything for the fair sex, anything, by Jove; but so ridiculous for a man—anything for a woman—very sorry. Good morning!" and away they went, without another word, leaving Campbell to find his way out as best he could.

"It is really very disheartening," he said to his wife, "I shall try no more." There were no more to try, but that was John's hopeful way of putting it. "Never mind, my dear," whispered his wife, with a kiss, "leave it vague, be satisfied with 'under distinguished patronage'; we shall have a good house, and all our patrons are distinguished."

The bills appeared with a flourish of trumpets—

UNDER DISTINGUISHED PATRONAGE.

UNPRECEDENTED ATTRACTION.

FOR THIS NIGHT ONLY;

and all the rest of it. Although not the leading man, Campbell was very popular, and the kindly public were acquainted with his misfortune—the poor bed-ridden child created the utmost sympathy.

Many and many whose business necessitated passing the house, had seen the little fellow in his bed at the window, and remarked the mother's tender care—many and many a sympathizing soul looked up to the window and blew kisses from the opposite side of the street, and the urchins of the neighbourhood used to play in front of the house, to amuse and interest the little prisoner; and so days slipped away and brought them nearer and nearer to the great occasion. The doctor's dreaded bill had been requested and duly forwarded—it was considerably made as

little as possible, still it amounted to the awful sum of twenty pounds.

Dare they hope for as much profit from the benefit? and then, how about the other things? Campbell had already made up his mind to walk his journey. She would have cheerfully shared his pilgrimage, but the child couldn't be left, so, perforce, they must go by coach.

While the wife was busy in the baby's bedroom, and Campbell was practising some important points, in his Daggerwood dressing-gown, there came a startling aristocratic knock. In an instant the house was in a flutter. "Some ladies for Mr. and Mrs. Campbell." "Good gracious! my dear, I'm so untidy; you go." "No, you go!" Whilst they were deciding who should go, and making themselves smart enough to be seen, the young ladies in the parlour were quietly inspecting the apartment, a little disappointed that it was not such a palace as they had seen on the stage, or pictured in their fond imaginations, and wondering whether the popular actor would shake hands, or merely bow: they hoped he would shake hands—so nice to think of it while he was acting—surely this is not his right abode! A pleasant chat, a few pounds worth of tickets for the benefit, the desired shake of the hand, and they went away assured he was the best actor living, and a perfect hero of romance.

As the eventful day approached, the Campbells became more and more familiar with friendly calls for tickets, and occasional small sums in excess of the theatre price from sympathizing patrons; indeed, they made a point of being "tidy" and fit to be seen every day. Nothing, however, delighted them so much as the following letter from the doctor, for they detected in it that noble

charity which shuns publicity, and effects its purpose without humiliating the recipient.

"Dear Mrs. Campbell,—Please send, me twenty-five pounds' worth of places for your benefit; so many of my friends desire to be present on the occasion. I heartily wish you a bumper, and brilliant success in the plays you have selected. Notes enclosed," etc., etc.

At last the day arrives with all its intensified anxiety. Just such weather as sends people eagerly into the theatre with fair prospects of getting home dry and comfortable. Crowds at boxes, pit, and gallery. Campbell was elated beyond expression at the brilliant prospect before him. "Oh, Louie!" he said to his wife with a fond embrace, "we shall have such a glorious house;" the wife lifted her sweet lips to receive her handsome husband's caress with a glad happy smile and tender pressure of the hand, to show the mutual sympathy of these united souls. "Yes, John, a glorious house! Oh, the gladness of it. No debt, no doubtingly looking forward to the morrow, comfort for their little afflicted one, comparative wealth for months to come."

And now the bustle and noise of the filling house as they settle into their seats; the pleasant recognition of neighbour and friend; the tumultuous buzz, subsiding only as the notes of the musicians attract the ear.

Enthusiastic applause and calls after every act greeted our hero throughout the play; he was completely successful. The leading man even admitted that "he was carried away," and "didn't think it was in him."

After the tragedy, Campbell came to the front, in accordance with the custom of that time, to thank his friends, and announce the repetition of the performance the following evening. Full of hopes and life, he acquitted himself admirably.

The affectionate wife's congratulations were reserved for home. She had now her part of the entertainment to perform, and sweetly pretty she looked as "Lilian, the Show Girl," upon which the curtain was about to rise. I shall not attempt a description of the piece; suffice that it came successfully to the part where the gipsy lies hidden in the sack, and is shot at by Everard. "Stand aside," he says to Lilian, "I'll see if I can hit it." He fires high, according to theatrical custom—and—oh! horror! a groan, one pitiful groan, and a thud—and a brave, strong man fell from stair to stair—dead! Conceive the agony of it. Dead!

At the moment of the shot, Campbell was coming downstairs from his dressing-room, with a half-uttered joke and a smile on his lips, he was so happy. There, at the foot of the stairs, he lay now motionless—no one could believe it. "Great God! not shot! the groan must have come from the boy in the sack. No! raise him—carry him into the green-room—there is no wound—send for help—it may be but a fit—give air." Alas! no air shall evermore give life to that breast; no wife's tender voice rouse the heart's joy—he's dead.

An electric thrill pervades the place as by magic; it is known everywhere. "Campbell's shot! Campbell's shot!"

The leading man kneels by his side, and takes the yielding hand in his—no enmities now—all hushed before the Great King of Terrors. "Don't let the wife in!" "Shut the door; spare her the knowledge even for a short hour!" But no, the terrible truth is not to be kept even from the ear that least would hear it. An undefinable fear, a ghastly dread, has taken possession of the woman's heart, the last to know what has happened. Kindly hands attempt to draw her from the

fatal fascination of that room. Averted eyes, expressive silence, speak more eloquently than words—she shudders! “What is it? why do you hold me back? Something terrible has happened—I must, I will know!”

“Keep back, Mrs. Campbell, it is all right.” But the tears in the speaker’s eyes belie his words.

The wife dashes forward, makes her way through the unwilling crowd, who fain would spare her that sight of death. A piteous wail comes from her tortured heart, “Oh, John! my husband!”

Her eyes starting from her head, she looks round on the pitying faces, who can do nothing to help her. She looks at his, that one face which was her world—“he’s gone! for ever gone!” At that moment the kind old doctor arrived; the little hope which might have lurked in friendly bosoms was soon dispelled. One drop of blood, one drop alone revealed the cause of death. There, over the region of the heart, was a wound almost too small to be seen, but enough to send him to eternity. Let us leave this scene of horror!

“My papa! my papa! oh come to me,” cried the boy, with outstretched hands, for he had lain awake all night, wondering why none of them came home. The door opened, but not to bring to him the loving face he longed so much to see.

The mother was carried into the room prostrate. They take the affrighted child from her side, and as they carry the little shivering, trembling form from the room, the mother’s stony eyes follow him—follow him, and then a hunger comes to them. A broken voice is heard, “My boy! my boy!” and there, locked in the mother’s arms, they leave the orphaned and the widowed together.

My sad story is told, and if it has shown

that an actor’s life is not all a summer holiday, that his triumphs are not always victories, that his joys may be tempered with sorrows, my purpose is answered.

The ever-kind doctor exerted himself to find the cause of death, and tracing the course of the tiny wound over the heart, he discovered that a *pin*—a common *pin*—had entered the heart, and lodged there. How it got into the gun no one could tell.

Mrs. Campbell found friends in her great trouble, and the public espoused her cause.

Time, the great healer, brought its softening balm; but no time could efface the memory of John Campbell’s tragic end.

THE STORY OF A GOOD GOBLIN.

BY E. L. BLANCHARD.



A LITTLE more than forty years ago—or, for the satisfaction of those who insist on chronological accuracy, on the evening of Saturday, September 15th, 1838—I was waiting at

the wing of the Royal English Opera, as the Lyceum was then called, to accompany my early friend, George Wieland, to the City of London Theatre. The famous pantomimist, who was here filling up his time before the

recommencement of the Drury Lane season, had promised to give his services that night for the benefit of a well-known clown at the East End, who stood sadly in need of some substantial help through sudden pressure on his pecuniary resources, caused by the afflictions that had befallen his family. It was well known in the profession that the purse and personal services of George Wieland were ever at the disposal of his more unfortunate brethren; but in this case he had taken especial interest, as the poor wearer of the motley supplicating his aid was a man of acknowledged worth and ability, though his talents had never enabled him to secure more than a scanty subsistence for a family increasing out of all proportion to his reputation.

Old playgoers need not be told that Wieland was an artist in his peculiar line, excelling all who had come before him, and who has never been equalled since. He was about twenty-eight years of age at this time, but had been upon the stage since a child; and his marvellous embodiment of the droll imp in the ballet of "The Daughter of the Danube" had then placed him at the highest point of his particular branch of the profession. In the dangerous department of the art to which he had devoted himself with so much zeal, he had suffered the usual penalties of popularity; and after being shot up traps and sent flying off on wires at perilous heights for nearly a quarter of a century, the reflection that so many of his limbs were left unbroken used to astonish him in his frequent moments of serious meditation. He was, however, no mere acrobat or gymnast. His powers of expressing purpose by action were of an extraordinary kind; and when Edmund Kean, after witnessing some of his remarkable panto-

mimic performances, used to say "that boy could convey, by gestures alone, the significance of every line of 'Hamlet,'" the compliment conveyed was felt to be only a fair tribute to the cleverness of an exponent of what is now almost a lost art.

On the Saturday night referred to, Wieland was playing, for the twenty-eighth time, his popular character of Diavoletto, in Alexander Macfarren's now almost forgotten dramatic composition, known as "The Devil's Opera," in which Miss Priscilla Horton as Pepino, the page, and Miss Poole as Signora Giovannina, the *gouvernante*, rendered with such admirable effect the best songs of the composer. In the last scene, Wieland had to rapidly run down to the footlights on his knees, a feat of physical dexterity on which he had always prided himself. The carelessness of a stage-carpenter had left the trap by which the pantomimist had ascended a few moments before, above the level, and the result was a severe injury to the kneecap of the performer, that compelled the immediate descent of the curtain. Borne to the wing in an insensible condition, Wieland was placed on a couch, while the nearest surgeon was sent for. When he attended, the painful nature of the accident suggested the ready opinion that many days, if not weeks, must elapse before the pantomimist could appear in public again. Wieland, suffering most acute tortures, feebly murmured that he had promised, in the course of the next hour, to appear at the "City of London," in his character of the imp in the ballet of "The Daughter of the Danube," and that if disappointed, the audience would probably resent their displeasure by hooting at the poor clown who was taking a benefit that night, and injure, in many ways, the prospect of

providing for the poor sick family depending on the extra attraction that had been offered. Medical remonstrance was of no avail, and the coach, coming to the stage door of the Lyceum at the appointed time, Wieland was helped into the vehicle, and I accompanied him, in his state of acute suffering from the injured limb, to the theatre then recently opened in Norton Folgate. The house was full to overflowing, and relying on the un-failing punctuality of the prominent "star," the overture to "The Daughter of the Danube" was, at the instigation of the prompter, proceeding at the appointed hour. There was but a short time left for assuming the needful costume, during which brief period Wieland fainted three times from the extreme physical agony he was enduring, but the promise he had so generously given had been faithfully kept, and though the weird antics of the amusing goblin never created more merriment than on that occasion, and tears, wrung by pain, streamed frequently from under the mask during the memorable combat with Gilbert, the good-natured self-sacrificing representative of the German goblin exerted himself more than usual, and even complied with the earnest demand of the audience for a repetition of the principal movement. "This will lay me up for another month," said Wieland feebly to me as we parted after midnight, at the door of his house in a street near Bedford Square; "but, thank heaven! I have heiped to put into the pockets of the poor fellow a good hundred pounds, for the benefit of the sick children he is working so hard to support."



LANDLADIES.

By H. J. BYRON.



SOME people imagine an actor's happiness to depend upon his success with his audience, his comfort in the theatre, or the disposition and fair dealing of his manager. Not a

bit of it. I have acted, sir, in palatial "grand opera" houses, and performed in what were little better than booths; I have ministered (at least, I flatter myself I have) to the pleasure of the intellectual palate of "Modern Athens;" I have excited the risibility (in the serious drama) of the warm-hearted and fun-loving Hibernians; I have shouted myself hoarse for the delectation of the denizens of Bullocksmithy, and I have roused the bucolic enthusiasm of the Boeotian inhabitants of the "agricultural districts." My experiences have been long and varied; "here to-day and gone to-morrow" (very often gone to-morrow). I have flitted (Caledonian and suggestive phrase!) like a bee from one Thespian flower to another, without making any particular amount of honey, but with a considerable gathering of experience as to the peculiarities of that indispensable and most important entity, the "theatrical landlady."

Yes, sir, that particular individual has it

in her power to render your sojourn an agreeable one, an endurable one, an irritating one, or a maddening one, as the case may be. I have passed through all of those phases. Amongst them, perhaps, the maddening predominated. To return to my starting point. A provincial actor—and we are all provincial actors now-a-days—may endure with equanimity the many outside and professional annoyances which beset him, provided he lights upon a landlady with a remnant of a conscience and a limited knowledge of cookery. I have, after knowing the type for years, succeeded in reducing it to three classes, according to a very simple rule of my own, which I have never known to fail. It has the advantage of being a rule, or rather a test, which you can very speedily apply and prove its efficacy. I divide landladies into three classes. First, those who leave your brandy alone; second, those who appropriate it defiantly; third, those who take you for a fool, and fill up the space hitherto occupied by your Cognac with water. Occasionally your respect for the first-mentioned landlady is a little dashed by frequent recurrence of “faintness,” “all-overishness,” “spasms,” and other sudden attacks to which ladies who let lodgings are peculiarly liable, and which demand, or at least suggest, an immediate donation of an alcoholic nature. Occasionally these slight ailments become a little wearisome in their frequent repetition; if so, you have no alternative but to mislay the key of the sideboard, and then it only too often happens that the *first* class landlady develops into a furtive and burglarious specimen of number two. Sometimes you may imagine you have done a clever thing by securing apartments with a total-abstaining family. But there is generally a servant of anti-teetotal proclivities, or

an all-absorbing cat who has refused to be converted to the tenets of Father Matthew.

About the proceedings of the second class of landlady, there is a certain straightforwardness, not to say boldness, which to an extent robs them of their irritating quality, and you *can* prove the theft if you are rash enough to go to extremes. In early life, I permitted my indignation, on more than one occasion, to get the better of my judgment, and I have tackled the tippler. My accusation has been received in various ways, ranging from indignant denial to tearful and penitential confession. I have, however, been once threatened with immediate expulsion; twice drawn into fistic encounters with enraged husbands; three times compelled to apologize; and more often than I care to mention have been met with such an agonized look of wrongly-suspected virtue, that I have been compelled to sullenly swallow my indignation, which has been all my landlady has left me. I was some years in endeavouring to “nonplus” this miserable creature. At length, Tom Tragico (an assumed name, I will admit), who “liked his glass”—which means invariably half-a-dozen—put me up to a wrinkle.

“Keep it in a flask,” he said, “and the flask in your pocket.” This advice I followed, and foiled many a female inebriate for a considerable period. Still, it is degrading to walk about the world with a spirit-flask as a perpetual “hand-property,” and in unguarded moments one is apt to bring it out in the presence of uncongenial souls, or to sit upon it suddenly when in solitary seclusion.

But as for the landlady who robs you of your liquor and substitutes water, no words of mine or anybody else’s are sufficiently severe and scathing to meet her case. To

those who have been born with a palate (which, I believe, is generally how they *are* born), or who have by long experience learnt the difference between the article "neat" and the article sophisticated and weakened, the act is one which it is difficult to bear without "high words," which I have always translated as "low language."

I am a mild man myself, sir, and do not, as a rule, indulge in expletives; but I have been occasionally driven to forget the sex of my larcenous landlady, and to "round" on that wretched impostor in a manner which has brought forth remonstrances from the neighbours. But to be looked upon as a FOOL! I put it to *you*, sir, as a judge of the article—*isn't* it—eh?

Yes, sir, I have failed (frequently), and have been triumphant (at intervals). I have had "benefits" which placed me on a pinnacle (so to speak), and others which have left me rather worse off than I was before (which was unnecessary, and one would have thought impossible), and as a manager I have suffered much indignity from a confiding, though somewhat inefficient "company." BUT (and I should like the "but" to be printed large) I have "never, no, never—well, hardly ever"—undergone the torments I have endured in "theatrical lodgings."

But, sir, I have been told by those who (I presume) have been in them, or rather behind them, that there are no clouds without a silver lining. I believe it. There are landladies AND landladies. As a man, I should be sorry to conclude my remarks without bearing testimony to the landlady who, "does good by stealth and blushes to find it—pay day," to the kindly soul who saves her impecunious lodger every penny she can, and frequently helps him on his way with a loan from her own too slender purse.

There are very many of these generous, warm-hearted women dotting the provinces, taking a keen interest in the profession of their temporary lodgers, reading their *Era* regularly, and always sticking up for the honour of the craft. Bless 'em!

HOW I PLAYED PRINCE ALFRED.

BY W. TERRISS.



I HAD just returned from a long voyage, when I was a lad of tender years of age, and being invited by a wealthy but eccentric relative, to join him in a trip to the country, I gladly accepted the offer. We started from Paddington, my uncle en-

gaging a special saloon carriage, which, unhappily for us, as the sequel will show, was one of those occasionally used by the Royal Family, gorgeous as to its exterior, and bearing the royal arms.

I was wearing my uniform of a midshipman at the time, and was at first highly delighted with the unusual excitement caused by our carriage whenever we entered a station; but the interest in us and our proceedings became at length so marked that we began to feel somewhat uneasy, and we endeavoured, but in vain, to find some solution to the mystery—every hat being raised

as we entered a station, and rounds of cheering heard when we moved off—what could it, in Heaven's name, mean?

On arriving at our destination, Weston-super-Mare, amazement reached its climax—the station being crammed with a fashionable assemblage, our reception by the officials being simply overpowering. Dazed and bewildered, we entered a carriage, and drove at once to the Bath Hotel, surrounded and followed by an enthusiastic crowd. As I bowed frequently in acknowledgment of this mysterious and unaccountable greeting, the cheers and shouting were redoubled, and I sank back in blushing confusion, wondering what on earth my uncle or myself had done to merit such a princely reception. It was not until the next morning that we were enlightened by one of the doctors of the town, who had occasion to call at the hotel. The royal saloon carriage was the fatal cause, and carrying, as it did, a young midshipman in uniform, rumour at once proclaimed him no other than His Royal Highness Prince Alfred, travelling, of course, with his tutor. Explanations ensued, and the doctor promised to do his best to disabuse the expectant public of their mistake.

But it wouldn't do. Royalty didn't visit Weston-super-Mare every day; and the wish being father to the thought, the wave of credulity swept reason and common-sense away, and what was only a strong suspicion before, now became a certainty. A large crowd surrounded the hotel, and cries being raised for "the Prince—the Prince!" I appeared upon the balcony, and with the nearest approach to a princely demeanour that I could assume at so short a notice, I kept on bowing and smiling in response to the cheering, until I suddenly disappeared, making a decidedly rapid and humiliating

exit, for my uncle had hold of my coat-tail, and pulled me back into the room, telling me not to make a fool of myself. To show the extent to which the delusion spread, I may mention that the church bells were set ringing in honour (of what was termed) the auspicious event. A meeting of the leading men of the place was convened to discuss what shape a demonstration (in honour of the Royal visitor) should assume. The excitement reached such a pitch at last, that the doctor and others considered it advisable for us to leave, to escape further annoyance, as when the truth became known, a corresponding reaction would set in. Before we had time, however, to order a carriage to drive us to the station, an enterprising fly proprietor placed at our disposal a barouche, attached to which were four resplendent grey tits, in which we started, and on our way to the terminus received a perfect ovation from the assembled thousands, hats waving and handkerchiefs fluttering at all the windows as we passed; and as we drove through High Street, a chemist with ultrapatriotic feelings forced in at the window a large bottle of scent, with an accompanying note, which contents flattered me upon my long line of Royal ancestors; and another patriot forwarded to the hotel an immense bouquet, accompanied with a glowing and flattering epistle. Having taken our tickets, we steamed out of the station (which was crammed with people), the public outside grumbling in no measured tone at no Royal Prince being among them, and many still unwilling to believe that so extraordinary a mistake had been innocently made.

I have kept to this day the empty scent-bottle and amusing letter as a memento of a most extraordinary case of mistaken identity. Since then many years have passed away,

and I, too, have played many parts, but none of them have left such an abiding impression on my memory as when I was unintentionally cast for the leading part of Prince Alfred, and played it on the shortest possible notice. In the *Bristol Times and Mirror* of March 8, 1864, there is an amusing column, headed, "An Extraordinary Case of Mistaken Identity." It is based upon this incident, and the chief actor was myself.

A NIGHT WITH KOTZEBUE.

By J. PALGRAVE SIMPSON.



AN accident had detained me in one of our large towns in the Midland district. It was no cotton or iron metropolis; but it was a town of considerable importance in its own esteem, and yet a dull-looking town, in which I had not a single acquaintance. I found, to my annoyance, that I could not proceed comfortably to my destination—Liverpool—until the following morning. What was I to do with the best part of a day before me? Well, the day might be dragged through in some sort of fashion. But how about the long dreary evening? The thought of the coffee-room at the hotel in solitude was deadening.

Was there a theatre? "Of course there is," was the indignantly given reply of the head-waiter. Was there any performance? Equally, of course. So I procured a play-bill; and my eyes were greeted with the promise of being more or less bored with the lugubrious play of "The Stranger." The principal characters—printed in large type—being undertaken by the favourite tragedian, Mr. Bensley, and Miss Clara Carmichael (from the principal London theatres). Both these celebrated artists were utterly unknown to me, although I had a tolerably extensive acquaintance with "the principal London theatres," but they were evidently not unknown to fame of some kind. I might have preferred a more genial entertainment. However, "*Va pour* a night with Kotzebue," I said. No, I did not. I only "mentally ejaculated" the resolve.

I whiled away my time, as best I could, in visiting what I was informed were "the interesting monuments" of the town, without, however, having had one single spark of interest lighted in my wearied soul; then returned to my hotel, where I had ordered my dinner at an early hour, in order to be able to bestow my worthiest appreciation on the great artists "from the principal London theatres."

As I entered the coffee-room, I saw one table, which had been evidently laid out for my humble repast. But my domain had been invaded. A male form was already seated at this table, with its head bowed down on the cloth, between its outstretched arms. Was the man asleep, or drunk, or prostrate with despair? At all events, I considered the table mine by right; and that right I determined to assert. So, operations were commenced with a loud "Hem!" This rasping indication of my presence was of no avail. A

louder "Hem!" had no better effect. At last, with a third "Hem!" I gently placed my hand on the man's shoulder. He slowly lifted his head; and, to my astonishment, I saw before me the face of my dear friend, Charlie Campbell, whom I had never lighted on for some two years or more—as is very generally the case between dear friends, who are whirled hither and thither in the vast maelstrom of London. Charlie sprang up with alacrity on seeing me. After the unavoidable enthusiastic greetings and exclamations of surprise at thus coming together, he consented to partake of my imminent dinner. The bell was rung; and the necessary orders were given for two.

When left alone, we gave way to the questionings usual on such occasions. What had we both been doing this long age past? My tale was soon told. But Charlie—what part had he been enacting in life? His heavy and embarrassed sigh was certainly not an auspicious prologue to his answer. He had married a charming woman, I had heard. Another sigh! "And awfully happy, I suppose," was my suggestion, somewhat doubtfully made. He shook his head mournfully. What was it? Our old friendship authorized me, I thought, to ask his confidence. He declared that he was most happy to bestow it on me. He had long sought an opportunity of relieving his mind; and to whom could he better tell everything that was weighing on heart and soul than to me? Flattering this, at all events!

His tale, although a common one, was certainly not a pleasant one to hear. As I had been told, he had married a charming woman. It had been a love match. Each had adored the other. At first, Charlie's happiness had been "more than that of mortal man." But, presently, occasional

differences of temper arose. His "little woman" was given to perpetual "nagging." His susceptibilities were wounded daily, until his life became insupportable. Insane fits of jealousy, without cause, on the side of the wife, had burst, like perpetual thunderstorms, on the romance of his married life. Now, one thunderstorm may clear the air, and be an augury of fine weather afterwards; but thunderstorms of daily occurrence must din any poor married man into madness. At length, it was agreed, by mutual consent, to disagree entirely, and for ever. A separation ensued, on the understanding that husband and wife were never to meet again. Charlie's wife had gone to live with her mother, who had since died. He knew nothing of her whereabouts. She had never once written to "the monster," as she had sweetly designated him, since the day they had parted.

It was evident that Charlie Campbell was not a whit happier—poor fellow!—in his state of grass-widowerhood than he had been in his troubled married life. I wrung his hand sympathetically, and groaned congenially to the heavy sighs with which he ended his sad story.

"But what are you doing now?" I said, after a pause. "And what brings you here?"

Charlie looked a little ashamed. But, presently, with a sort of apologetic smile, he said, "Well, you see, old fellow, I had nothing to do with my solitary life. I yearned for employment and forgetfulness. You remember the success I used to have as an amateur actor. Although warned that I was crossing the Rubicon from respectability to Bohemianism, I burned my ships, and went on the stage. And, I may add, that I have been very decently successful."

I gently murmured that my eyes had

never been greeted with the name of Mr. Charles Campbell in the *Era* or any other theatrical paper.

"Likely enough!" said Charlie, smiling. "I have taken the stage name of Randal Harwood; and under that designation I am not quite unknown to fame."

"Hem!" was my somewhat deprecating and doubting exclamation. "But what brings you here?"

"My last engagement had terminated," he said; "and I heard there was a possible opening in old Mangle's company here. I came over, saw the Manager of my hopes, and have received the unsatisfactory but decisive answer, 'Company full—salary list already too heavy—very sorry—cannot find room for you—et cetera, et cetera.' And so I have had my journey for nothing, and must drag my weary sock and buskin, without rest for the sole of my foot, elsewhere. This is hyperbole, I know. I mean I am about to take train to another town."

I wished my old friend "luck" and better chance; and I was talking over with him his "line," and his hopes and aspirations in his future career on the stage, when dinner was solemnly brought in by the solemn head-waiter. An extra genial bottle was ordered; and we "fell to" with spirits which had considerably risen in the barometric scale of nervous temperament.

We were thus progressing most favourably in our repast, when an elderly gentleman rushed into the coffee-room in an evident state of great excitement. He wore a suit of musty black, and a broad-brimmed hat, curled up on either side, like a pug-dog's tail. When removed, it displayed a head bald as a billiard ball.

"Ah! Mr. Harwood. There you are!" he exclaimed, before the solemn waiter in

attendance could interfere. "You can do me a most essential service. For heaven's sake, tell me—are you up in 'The Stranger'?"

"I have played it frequently," was Charlie's reply. "My study is good; and I have no doubt I could wing the part at a moment's notice. What do you mean?" Then he courteously introduced me to Mr. Mangle.

"What do I mean!" cried the excited manager, paying but little attention to the introduction. "Why! Bensley is taken bad—can't play—inebriated, I've no doubt. To-night is one of my grand bespeaks—the militia officers—band in attendance—no time to change the bill—can't shut the house up, and lose a lot of money. In one word—can you undertake to play 'The Stranger'? Sal. no object. Will pay you handsomely. Forgive my abrupt refusal this morning. It is a matter of life and death, sir!" He wiped his anxious and perspiring brow, with a glare of mad excitement, as if his life had actually depended on the answer.

"You can find me the dress?" said Harwood.

"Bensley's will fit you to a nicety."

"I will do it," replied my friend.

"You know there is no time for rehearsal," gasped Mangle. "The play begins in an hour."

"I know the business," replied my friend, composedly. "If necessary I shall contrive to conform myself to your, doubtless, refined stage management."

"Ah! you have saved my life!" cried the enthusiastic manager. "You will come?"

"I will be at the theatre in a quarter of an hour."

The distracted Mr. Mangle darted out of the room in an evidently less distracted frame of mind than that in which he had entered

it. He had even a beaming expression on his face.

"Do you mean to say you are actually going to play his part without any rehearsal?" I asked eagerly.

"I shall do my best; and I have no doubt I shall get through the whole creditably," answered Charlie, calmly.

After a few more hurried words we separated—Charlie to go to the theatre, and look through his part in "The Stranger," as speedily as possible, and I to clear my brain with a cup of coffee.

I was in my place in the theatre some little time before the curtain was raised, being unusually excited and nervous respecting the result of my friend's performance, and being disposed to think, as friends so often do, that Charlie was going to make a "confounded fool" of himself. The house was what might be considered a "bumper." The militia officers, in their most gorgeous uniforms, a very large female attendance—evidently attracted by the military element—and a pit and gallery crammed by occupants, for whom the militia band—if not the play—was an attraction. No wonder poor old Mangle considered that his closing the house would be a death-blow to him.

The play began; and I verily believe my heart was beating a double tattoo. The time came for the appearance of "The Stranger;" and Mr. Randal Harwood entered amidst considerable applause—a due apology having been previously made for him on account of the "serious indisposition" of the popular favourite, Mr. Bensley.

Charlie was a very handsome fellow; and his appearance, although his expression was gloomy, as befitted the part, prepossessed the audience in his favour. His diction was good, and, thank heavens! not stagy. His

action quiet, but appropriate. I was decidedly pleased with him; and I recovered partially from my nervous trepidation.

Presently Miss Clara Carmichael swept on the stage as "Mrs. Haller." The "tremendous reception" awarded her, proved at once that she was a great local favourite. Certainly her appearance was captivating. She was a very handsome young woman. Her manner was ladylike and graceful. But in spite of her experience in the principal London theatres, as duly announced on the bills, I could not but fancy that she showed traits of being something of a novice. My mind, however, was so pre-occupied with Charlie, that I paid the leading actress less heed than I should have done otherwise.

The play dragged on its somewhat weary course, enlivened by the comic scenes of Solomon, played by the great Mangle himself, and Peter, by the favourite low comedian; and I had arrived at the end of the fourth act without any special sense of tedium. The scene came when "The Stranger" was to be introduced, for the first time to "Mrs. Haller." Never shall I forget it! The start, and the surprised and agonized look of the actor, as he gazed on his guilty wife—the affrighted shriek of the actress as she stood unexpectedly before her injured husband, then tottered, collapsed, and fell fainting on the floor—were pieces of acting which could not be surpassed by the greatest artists of the day.

The applause, in which I joined *con amore*, was tremendous; and I had scarcely recovered from my emotion, when I was tapped on the shoulder, and requested, by an official of the theatre, to come round behind the scenes. Mr. Harwood *must* see me, I was told; and Mr. Mangle would be "greatly obliged."

I was "passed round" by a mysterious door, and ushered into Mr. Harwood's dressing-room. He was walking up and down in great excitement, while Mangle sat by in a state of utter collapse, with his hands thrust under his Solomon's wig, scratching his bald skull.

"It's no use," cried Charlie. "I can't go on again. I won't go on! It's my own wife, old boy—it's my own wife! I cannot face her any more! I am smitten to the heart! Let an apology be made at once!"

"And Miss Carmichael, too," cried the despairing manager, "swears—I mean protests—that she cannot put foot on the stage again to-night—too exhausted—a real fainting fit. What's to be done?—what's to be done?"

"There is nothing for it but an apology, and the farce," cried Charlie, striding up and down.

"Look here!" said I to the manager. "Do you go again to Miss Carmichael. Use all your arts—and I know your diplomacy is sure to be first-rate—that of a manager of your tact and experience always is—to persuade her to waive all private feeling, and finish the play. Her local popularity—which she would endanger—etc., etc.—you know what to say."

Mangle disappeared. It was difficult, with all the *finesse* I could manage to bring to my aid, to persuade my agitated friend to

consent to face his wife once more. It was but for a brief moment, I argued; and they would then part again to meet no more. At length he consented; although his excitement seemed almost to have deprived him of his reason.

I remained behind the scenes to witness the *dénouement* of the play at the wings. The trying scene of meeting came at last. The emotion of both husband and wife was excessive. But they contrived to speak their words in choking voice; and when Mrs. Haller was received in the arms of her reconciled husband, and glided fainting to the ground, Charlie bent over her and impressed a frantic kiss on her lips. The curtain fell. Never, perhaps, was there ever such enthusiastic applause heard in that theatre. It was impossible to resist the splendid call. Husband and wife appeared before the audience—hand in hand.

Need I expatiate on what ensued? I found them, after a few minutes, seated side by side. Could I doubt that the mimic reconciliation of the stage had become a reconciliation in reality?

I discreetly retired, and left for Liverpool the next morning; and I afterwards received a letter from Charlie to tell me, that, after their mutual vows of forbearance and conciliation, he really believed that he had entered on a new life of happiness, all owing, he admitted, to that memorable "Night with Kotzebue."



OUR LITTLE WORLD.

By JOHN HOLLINGSHEAD.



LARGE as the world doubtless is, and easy as it now is to go from place to place, there are few of us who do not live and move and have our being in a very limited circle. We are drawn

towards a particular spot, and once there we remain as fixed and immovable as the dog tied to a stake. We dream of the great world outside our narrow limits, but we work with various degrees of contentment and success on our little yard of space. As we have been drawn there at first by some powerful influence, so we proceed to draw others. Our companions often strike root on the same spot, and by degrees we found a special colony in a great city.

My particular spot in the great world—the spot on which I have been more or less settled for years before the GAIETY THEATRE was built or thought of—is the spot on which that theatre and its surroundings now stand. The first periodical that ever excited my literary ambition—the pioneer of all the cheap weekly magazines—was published in the Strand, at a little stationer's shop which now forms part of the *Field* office. It was called

the *Mirror*, and its proprietor was a Mr. Limbird. The *Mirror* died long before its proprietor, and Mr. Limbird appeared to me to look out of his small tradesman's window with dreamy wonder at the flock of magazines and periodicals which fluttered round him.

At the corner of Wellington Street and the Strand—belonging to the owners of the *Field*, the *Law Times*, etc.—was the office of the *Critic*, a journal of the *Athenæum* type, to which I was an occasional contributor.

My first serious step in literature, however, was made in *Household Words*, under the editorship of the late Charles Dickens, and the office of this journal (now the office of the *Army and Navy Gazette*) stands next to the stage-door of the Gaiety Theatre. If I were to take a few bricks out of the back wall of the room in which I was first introduced to Charles Dickens, and in which I first began my work as an author and a journalist, I could look on to the stage of the Gaiety Theatre, where eleven years ago I first began my work as a theatrical manager. On the other side of the theatre—in Catherine Street—was the office of the *Illustrated Times*—a weekly paper, half magazine—to which, in company with Edmund Yates, G. A. Sala, the Broughs, and scores of others, I was a contributor under the editorship of Mr. Henry Vizetelly. When the so-called famine in London occurred in 1861, I was asked by Mr. Algernon Borthwick to write a series of articles in the *Morning Post* on the condition of the London poor, and these articles were reprinted under the title of

"Ragged London," and published by Messrs. Smith, Elder, and Co. Looking out of my managerial room at the Gaiety Theatre, across a narrow yard, I can almost see into the room at the *Morning Post* office, where every night for about a fortnight I was engaged in recording my melancholy experiences as "Our Special Commissioner."

I may pass by the *Athenæum*, which is published a few doors above the Gaiety in Wellington Street, and to which I was an occasional contributor, and proceed to my first introduction to Mr. Toole. I was introduced to him at the corner of Wellington Street, in the Strand, by the late Mr. H. Widdicombe, and I found him living in chambers at the Wellington Street entrance of the Exeter Arcade, exactly on the site of the present stage-door of the Gaiety. Here it was that I discussed with him the prospects of my first farce — "*The Birthplace of Podgers*"—which he ultimately produced at the Lyceum Theatre, opposite. Here it was also that he entertained me and our common friend, Henry Irving, who had just made his first appearance in London at the Princess's Theatre, in a piece called "Ivy Hall"—an adaptation by the late John Oxenford of *Le Roman d'un Jeune Homme Pauvre*. As we looked out of the window into the street, Henry Irving hardly expected to become the possessor of the theatre opposite, and I certainly never expected that a theatre would be built for me almost underneath our feet.

My connection with the Lyceum Theatre opposite did not finish with the production of my first farce. I made my first appearance as an amateur burlesque actor, and as an amateur pantomimist on the same boards, in both cases, of course, for a charitable object. My "first appearance on any stage,"

however, was not made at the Lyceum, but at the neighbouring Covent Garden Theatre, several years earlier, and under somewhat peculiar circumstances. Wandering one night past the stage door of old Covent Garden, I found it open and unguarded, and with the boldness and curiosity of youth (I am speaking of 1845) I darted in and found myself, in a few seconds, amongst endless machinery and in total darkness. Groping for some little time, with half the romance of the "Arabian Nights" in my head, and an immense amount of theatrical dust in my hands, I saw a glimmer in the distance, and making towards it, found it to be a gas-jet projecting from the wall. On the ground I saw a piece of brown paper, and lighting this I guided myself still further, until I came to some ladder-steps. I mounted these, and pushed open a door which admitted me to the back of the stage. The whole house was before me, brilliantly lighted, and full of people, but screened from my view by a high wooden barrier which was built across the stage. Climbing up this barrier, by the aid of a few rough projections and considerable skill in this kind of work, I was soon able to look over the top, and I found that I was an uninvited guest on the platform at one of the great Anti-Corn Law League Meetings. The speaker, I think, was the late W. J. Fox, a short man with a Beethoven head, and a practised orator. In a semi-circle behind him were Richard Cobden, John Bright, Colonel Perronet Thompson, Milner Gibson, and many others whose faces had been made familiar to me by popular portraits. This was my first appearance on any stage, but not my last, and I think I have said enough to prove that I, at least, have not wandered far from a given centre.

THE PHANTOM THEATRE.

BY ROBERT REECE.



THE time having, in my opinion, at length arrived, when the most impressive experience of my life should be revealed, I will endeavour to place it on record frankly and

simply; unimpeded by digression, unembellished by comment; leaving the consideration of my narrative to the thoughtful readers of these pages, and (preliminarily) scorning the inevitable jests of the sceptical and frivolous.

My name is Sparkle de Witt. I am a barrister and author of some standing; eking out the precarious subsistence derivable from my legal practice, by dramatic efforts, which have gained for me more reputation than pecuniary importance. My temperament is sanguine, and my imagination fervid; but I possess a logical brain, and am neither affected by sentiment, nor misled by credulity. These initiatory remarks being necessary to indicate that I am the last man in the world to be betrayed by simple hallucination, cannot fairly be regarded as episodal.

Some two years since (the precise date is of no importance to the reader), I was sitting in my writing-room, wearied with work,

worried by stormy and unsatisfactory rehearsals, and regretting, from the bottom of my soul, that Fate had selected me for the line of life I follow. The hour was late, the moderator lamp burnt feebly, and had twice resented my winding it up by angry grunts and choking snorts; the decanter of toast-and-water (I would call attention to the beverage I invariably indulge in of an evening) was empty. I was gloomy, sorrowful, and alone. I had, in a desperate fit of moodiness, at last resolved to see if there were any more toast in the cupboard, when the roll of carriage-wheels swiftly approaching my house, distracted me for a moment. I ran to the window; to my surprise, the carriage had stopped at my gate; and almost immediately afterwards a ring at the bell compelled me to descend to the hall, and open the front door. I naturally concluded that some mistake as to the address had occurred, when a gentleman of undeniable manner, and irreproachably dressed in evening costume, presented himself with a graceful bow, and said, tentatively:—

“I have the distinguished privilege of speaking to Mr. Sparkle de Witt, the famous dramatist?”

What could I answer to this flattering inquiry? I was obliged to murmur “Yes.”

“I am profoundly concerned to have thus disturbed you at an inconvenient hour,” pursued the stranger, “but I am the bearer of a note which could not possibly have been brought a minute sooner to you. It is from Mr. Mæcenæ Foster, Manager of the Utopian Theatre. He only arrived from Ayr by

this night's mail, and desired me to present it at once !”

I bowed at the name of “manager” ; but my face, no doubt, betrayed my perplexity.

“The name of Mr. Mæcenus Foster,” smiled the stranger, “is probably unknown to you ; but your talents are held in his highest esteem, and he is desirous (as his note will doubtless explain) of enlisting those talents into his service, if wholly convenient and agreeable to *yourself*. I will ask you to be so obliging as to read his note.”

I hastily looked at the missive. The paper was like vellum ; it emitted the odours of Arabia and Bond Street ; its edges were golden, and dainty arabesques of deliciously-painted flowers embellished its margin. I dare not here repeat the charming phraseology of that epistle—its flattering appeal.

“I will be at Mr. Foster's service,” I faltered, “at twelve o'clock to-morrow morning.”

“You are goodness itself,” replied the stranger. “I will convey the happy intelligence to Mr. Foster at once ! Again accept my apologies for disturbing you ! Good-night !”

“Will you not step in for a few—” I had begun, when the stranger, with a modest air, said :—

“Mr. Foster would regard it as a liberty on my part, as, indeed, it would be ! I—I am only his valet ! Good-night, sir ! Mr. Foster's own brougham will be here at 11.45, to convey you to the theatre. Not a step, I pray !” and the stranger leapt into the pretty little *coupé*, and, in a moment, it and its flashing lamps were lost to sight.

I tottered upstairs. I re-wound the groaning moderator. I re-read that delightful note Mr. Foster had sent, and the roses

of Sharon had scented. *At last* I had a chance ! Somebody believed in me, after all. Fame, glory, wealth, would be no longer visions. I had out the toast and made some toast-and-water. I again read the letter.

“Strange !” said I to myself. “*Very* strange ! I thought I ~~knew~~ the name of every manager in the United Kingdom—but Mr. Mæcenus Foster ? Evidently a wealthy and discriminative man. Dear ~~me~~ ! Mæcenus Foster ! Now, who the devil ~~is~~ Mæcenus Foster ?”

No sooner had I uttered these words, than the lamp expired suddenly, and I heard a gust of wind pass by the casement with a low roar, as from an evil spirit striving to enter and seize a soul within, but baffled by a praying saint. I shuddered ; and hastily finding the matches, lighted a candle, and retired precipitately to bed.

Any record of my nocturnal sentiments would be digressive. I omit them altogether.

* * * * *

Punctually at a quarter to twelve (I had been up since seven a.m., sleeplessly anxious), the most perfectly appointed brougham I ever saw pulled up at my door. I instantly descended the steps and made for it ; a dapper little tiger, in blue and silver livery, had the brougham door open in a “jiffey.” I entered ; there was a speck of dust on my left boot ; the tiger swept it off with a cambric handkerchief, and, touching his hat to me, closed the door.

In a moment we were off. If the exterior of the carriage were charming, what can be said of the appointments of its inner self ? I am afraid of being episodic, and will not comment ; but from the daily papers, printed on rich satin, to the self-lighting

cigars (I never smoked such), all was luxuriously perfect. There was a review of Tomkins's piece at the Olympic, which absorbed me for a few minutes, for it was the chronicle of a failure, and in those few minutes I lost the exact route we were following. Suddenly the brougham stopped at a palatial residence, adjoining the grandest theatre I ever looked upon. Odd to say I had no recollection of having seen either house or theatre before that moment; but, really, they build so quickly now-a-days, that the marvels of Aladdin's palace cease to be regarded as anything more than a smartly carried out contract.

The tiger had the brougham door open in a moment. I descended, and was met on the threshold of the noble residence by—no! not by a powdered footman—by Mr. Mæcenas Foster himself—self-introduced! I have had some extended experience of managers, and I cannot forget this incident.

"My dear sir!" purred Mr. Foster; "this is indeed good of you! To take all this trouble to oblige me. But, I trust, you will not have occasion to regret your condescension. Pray let me assist you! Cyril! Beaumont! Anstruther! Pray attend to Mr. De Witt."

I was in a perfect whirl of confusion, as a cohort of silent, stealthy valets (amongst whom I recognized my strange visitor of the previous night, but obtained no recognition from him), relieved me of hat, stick, and gloves, and then disappeared, whilst Mr. Foster ushered me, with a thousand charming welcomes, into his "little sanctum."

I have mixed in society at once aristocratic and artistic. I have enjoyed the hospitality of *virtuosi*, and am not unacquainted with the lavishly-appointed boudoirs of some of our most popular actresses; but all these

experiences paled and faded, as I contemplated the tasteful glories of Mr. Foster's "sanctum." Everything that art, prompted by consummate refinement, and stimulated by boundless riches, could accomplish, was present in that fairylike apartment. I presume that bewilderment was strongly marked in my hasty glances from one article of *vertu* to another—from the marvellous *parquetrie* of the floor, to the *chefs d'œuvre* of Meissonier, Greuze, Reynolds, and De Neuville, which adorned the walls, where priceless tapestry did not glow. No doubt I looked confused and abashed, for Mr. Foster, with a smile, said, pleasantly:—

"I see you approve of my little den. It is my fancy to have my own chamber respectably appointed, and fit for the inspection of any one who may, as in your case, honour me by a visit."

I could only stammer out a few rapturous words.

"Before I trouble you," proceeded Mr. Mæcenas Foster, "with the dry details of business, I must offer you some slight refreshment," and, ignoring my feeble opposition, the manager pressed a golden button in the wall, and a silvery bell was heard to tinkle below; almost simultaneously, a low strain of sweet music stole into the quiet room, and a small table of ivory and gold, embossed with jewels, rose like an exhalation from some under-floor. The table was laid with exquisite dainties, and was surmounted by the very Parnassus of *épergnes*, loaded with the choicest flowers.

I uttered a cry of delight.

"My chief machinist, and stage-engineer, is an ingenious fellow," explained Mr. Foster, with a laugh. "This is his device. It saves trouble, you see. He was—is still, for all I know—Professor at Leyden. Allow

me!" and he busied himself in the vocation of host.

I *never* tasted such champagne.

"And now, most revered sir," said Mr. Foster, "I will briefly explain why I have taken the liberty of asking you here. I want you—if entirely agreeable to yourself, of course—to honour me, and assist me, by writing a comedy for my theatre."

I answered with becoming modesty, that I "would do my best."

"That is all I should expect, my dear sir," responded the manager. "*Your* best will always be good enough for me. Here is a list of my present company; but, pray, do not let *that* be an absolute guide. Cut out whom you please, engage whom you prefer."

I glanced at the company; it comprehended every great name in the theatrical world. "It will be no light task to fit such a distinguished company as this," I faltered. "Why, Irving, alone, would——."

"My dear sir," returned Mr. Foster, "you will experience none of the ordinary difficulties in my theatre. Mr. Irving is my salaried servant, he will do just as *you* think proper, from carrying on a salver in silence, to—well, any speaking part."

"Speaking part?" I stammered out.

"The same rule applies to all connected with, and engaged at, my establishment," replied Mr. Foster, coolly helping me again to the nectar from the gold-crested flagons. "I permit no class distinctions, or stage rivalries *here*. When you have "cast" your play, you will find the ladies and gentlemen selected perfectly ready, and ever anxious to do all in their power towards the advancement of the part with which they are respectively entrusted."

"This is all very wonderful," I could not

help remarking, as I stared at the formidable list. "When should you require the comedy?"

"I desire to consult *your* convenience entirely, Mr. De Witt," courteously returned Mr. Foster.

"You have no *immediate* necessity for——?"

"Not in the least," laughed the manager. "It is purely a question of art with me. This evening, will, I think, chronicle the two thousandth night of my present comedy; and, of course, my people may begin to wish for a change in the bill; but I have always a second (not a second-class) company at hand. They are, at present, travelling in Switzerland, I fancy."

I stared aghast. "Would this day month——?"

"Admirably!" responded Mr. Foster. "Mrs. Kendal, Ellen Terry, Irving, Hare, and—let me see!—oh! yes! some of our little people, will be returning. I can promise you Toole, Neville, James, Thorne, and Righton; and I've got Byron for certain!"

I gasped. I—*I!* had to write a comedy—and make jokes for H. J. Byron to speak!"

"And now to come to the more practical matter," recommenced Mr. Mæcenas Foster, cheerfully—"the terms!"

I tried to smile, but I meant to ask a good price; the work and the stake were important.

"Perhaps," proceeded Mr. Foster, "I had better at once explain that in my theatre I adopt the (I think, just) system of permitting the author to participate in the success of his work, without nailing him down to a term of nights, or other restriction. Of course, I am prepared, and only too pleased, to pay a sum of money down for the actual literary first-fruits; and such and such a

further sum per representation. I usually pay a thousand guineas down ; in *your* case, of course, Mr. De Witt, I must increase this—subject, naturally, to your acceptance or rejection of the terms—to fifteen hundred. Will that preliminary sum suit you ? If not——”

I murmured that I was quite satisfied.

“Capital !” said the manager. “Now as to the nightly remuneration. I suppose twenty guineas, and a half share of all receipts, would be fair ?”

I replied that nothing could be fairer ; I was mentally alluding to my prospects.

“There is the agreement, then !” smiled Mr. Foster, pushing a paper to me ; “and there is the cheque !”

I can’t remember which I took first.

“This day month, then ?” I got out at last.

“This day month, *if convenient !*” said Mr. Foster ; “but in all things, consider *your* convenience.” He pressed another gold knob.

My late visitor appeared from behind the tapestry.

“The carriage for Mr. De Witt !”

In another minute I was being whirled to my chambers.

How squalid they seemed ! Never mind, I was going to be famous at last ; somebody had found out that a dramatic author was absolutely a human creature, who had feeling, sympathies, good intentions, and—ay, intelligence.

* * * * *

The month passed only too rapidly. How I did slave at that comedy ! The part for Nelly Farren worried me so, that I tore up half-a-dozen pages before I could get a start ; then Edward Terry and Hermann Vezin bothered me : it was a trial to have

only a gardener’s part, consisting of four lines, to give to the former, and less than “a length” to the latter. Mrs. Stirling was a “speechless” nonentity, and Lionel Brough and Miss Lydia Thompson had really nothing to say or do : the latter was only a guest in a ball-room scene. Then Toole would certainly kick at playing a comic footman, who appeared in only one scene (Act Third), and how to combine the great and opposite talents of George Honey, Mrs. and Mr. Bancroft, Shiel Barry, Miss Adelaide Neilson, Charles Wyndham, and G. W. Anson was a puzzle not easily to be solved. It could not be urged that I suffered from lack of “talent ;” on the contrary, the *embarras de richesses* was positively overwhelming ; and though I had been promised total immunity from any professional objections on the part of the company, I naturally felt highly nervous and diffident.

The comedy was ultimately finished, and the date fixed for me to read it to the ladies and gentlemen concerned in its representation. I was trembling with apprehension when the hour and Mr. Foster’s brougham arrived. The ordeal had to be passed anyhow, so I strung up my failing courage, and announced that I was ready ; but I presumed, as twelve o’clock had only that moment struck, a little margin of time was to be permitted to the company.

“Margin ! My dear sir,” laughed the manager, “you do not know the Utopian regulations yet ! Follow me. No one is ever late *here*.”

We passed down the lonely corridor, and Mr. Foster opened a side door. I was in the greenroom. Imagine a spacious and lofty apartment, half drawing-room, half conservatory, with every luxury in the way of couches, fauteuils, ottomans, etc., panelled with rich

mirrors, and hung with satin of the most delicate olive tint. The odour of adjacent flowers floated on the atmosphere, and the plashing of the tiny scent-fountains lent a dreamy influence of repose. Such was the greenroom of the "Utopian." But if the apartment was magnificent, the assembled company was even more brilliant. As I shall give the ever-memorable "cast" of my comedy in its proper place, I need not specially refer here to the array of genius before me. I may casually, however, mention that one face which I had *not* expected to meet, as belonging to a distinguished gentleman for whom I had not provided in the comedy, met mine with a pleasant and frank smile. It was the beaming countenance of Mr. Barry Sullivan. I hastily whispered to Mr. Foster.

"It's all right, my dear sir," returned that amazing man. "I told him to be handy in case you had need of him for any little chance part."

How shall I describe my reading of the comedy? How widely different was its reception by this noble company from what I had expected! How splendidly they took every point! How appreciatively they sighed

or smiled, as the subject demanded! How they laughed at the witticisms (Byron was specially delighted)! And how, when I concluded, the whole of the distinguished assembly rose to their feet and tumultuously applauded! It was embarrassing, it was affecting.

"Splendid! superb! brilliant! a masterpiece of construction and dialogue!" Such were the charming comments, such the overpoweringly-flattering verdict of the artists. Mr. Barry Sullivan, with a glowing smile, seized my hand and said—

"You must not omit me from *some* participation in this grand work! I implore you to let me appear as one of your guests! only as one of the guests in the last scene!"

I stammered out that I would try to "write in something."

"What?" said the lofty tragedian; "and probably mar the exquisite harmony of such a work! Never! I will—*may* I?—be a guest."

Of course I yielded.

The following was the inimitable disposition of the characters in my comedy. Such were the names that shed lustre upon my dramatic work:—

GLORY!

AN ORIGINAL COMEDY, IN THREE ACTS.

By SPARKLE DE WITT

Characters.

LORD BRABAZON	MR. S. BANCROFT.
SIR MUNGO M'BEAN (with a Song and Fling)	MR. HENRY IRVING.
PHELIM (his Irish valet)	MR. DION BOUCICAULT.
BARNEY (Phelim's brother)	MR. SHIEL BARRY.
TAPES (a lawyer's clerk)	MR. HERMANN VEZIN.
BILLINGS (a gardener)	MR. EDWARD TERRY.
PODDLE (a livery stableman)	MR. H. J. BYRON.

MAJOR FLUKER	} (Friends of Lord Brabazon)	{	MR. GEORGE HONEY.
SIR EPHRAIM POTT			MR. DAVID JAMES.
CAPTAIN BUNGAY			MR. THOMAS THORNE.
TWINKLE (a Footman)	.	.	MR. J. L. TOOLE.
MASHAM (a Broker)	.	.	MR. JOHN HARE.
POLICEMAN	.	.	MR. E. A. SOTHERN.

(Guests at Lord Brabazon's by Messrs. H. Neville, W. H. Kendal, Charles Wyndham, Lionel Brough, E. Righton, Charles Warner, and Barry Sullivan.)

LADY BRABAZON	.	.	.	.	MRS. BANCROFT.
LADY M'BEAN	.	.	.	.	MRS. STIRLING.
EDITH M'BEAN (her Daughter)	.	.	.	.	MISS NEILSON.
FLORENCE (her Maid, with a Song)	.	.	.	.	MISS GENEVIEVE WARD.
MARKHAM (a Milliner)	.	.	.	.	MISS ELLEN TERRY.
POPSY (a Waif)	.	.	.	.	MISS NELLY FARREN.
THE MATRON OF ST. JAMES'S HOUSE	.	.	.	.	MRS. KENDAL.

(Visitors, Dressmakers, etc., by Mdles. Fanny Josephs, Sophy Larkin, Amy Roselle, Nelly Bromley, Lydia Thompson, and Adelina Patti.)

STAGE MANAGER	.	.	.	.	MR. HOWE.
ACTING MANAGER	.	.	.	.	MR. JOHN RYDER.
PROMPTER	.	.	.	.	MR. B. WEBSTER.
MANAGER OF THE REFRESHMENT SALOON	.	.	.	.	MR. W. FARREN.
SCENIC ARTIST	.	.	.	.	MR. J. E. MILLAIS.
MUSICAL DIRECTOR	.	.	.	.	MR. ARTHUR SULLIVAN
GAS ENGINEER AND LIMELIGHT MAN	.	.	.	.	MR. EDISON.

After a delightful chat, and a sumptuous luncheon, I left the "Utopian." It had been a day of trial, but it had also been a day of triumph.

The rehearsals were artistic treats. At the *very first* we had the entire scenery, the full band, and every "property," and each artist in the comedy was letter-perfect.

I felt that I had done some injustice to Mr. Neville, and gave him an opening speech when the guests entered. The good fellow, with tears in his eyes, urged that Mr. Barry Sullivan should have it. *He* passed it on. Such was the sublimity of true rivalry. I had had no such experience before, and was consequently affected. It was ultimately

spoken by Mr. Creswick, a late addition to the guests.

With the ladies it was just the same. Miss Lydia Thompson gave up her dance to Miss Nelly Farren, and Miss Farren gave up her song to Mrs. Kendal. It was the prettiest contest I ever witnessed. Was it to be wondered at that, aided by such talent, and backed by such perfect management, the comedy was ready for production in less than a week! The advertisements were novel, elegant, and superabundant. Not a detail which could tend to success was omitted. We should easily begin and end with "Glory," as Byron wittily said. He and Toole were the life of the piece; full of

fun, but splendidly disdaining the embroidery of "gag."

At length the night of production arrived. All the Royal Family and Household, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Prelates of London, Durham, etc., the Houses of Lords and Commons, and the entire Bench of Judges were present. It was a noble, and a thrilling sight.

* * * * *

The curtain rose.

* * * * *

The curtain finally fell, amidst vociferous applause.

The comedy, the artists, the scenery, the music, the gas-fittings, and the author

were all a success. In a whirl of excitement I was pushed before the satin curtain by Mr. Mæcenas Foster, to receive the deafening approbation of artistic and critical London.

I remember no more !

* * * * *

I have been told that all I have attempted to describe here is an hallucination—that no such theatre ever existed, and that such a management is, and always will be, impracticable in this country.

I only reiterate my statements. Toast-and-water does not produce nightmare. I may have mislaid (I suppose I *did*), that preliminary cheque, but I know I never cashed it.

BENEFITS.

By LIONEL BROUGH.



NO one but an actor who has gone through the provincial "mill," and has regularly "served his time," can possibly have any idea of what a benefit, and the art of benefit making really means.

A London actor who appears in a piece, which runs for many hundreds of nights, and perhaps only plays two parts in as many years, takes his annual benefit as a matter of

course, pockets the receipts, and waits until his "date" comes round again to repeat the "dose." This is all very easy in London, and in the present state of theatrical "runs;" but, twenty years ago, more particularly in the provinces, this could not have happened. In those days, a run of *thirty* nights was a thing to be talked about. How then were benefits made? I will endeavour to explain. When a stock country actor signed his engagement for a year, or a season (which then meant about nine months) he expected benefit terms—which were usually a clear half, or third of the receipts—or perhaps to share after the ordinary expenses. His first move was then to get as near the date as he possibly could, and then get to work. Perhaps he would have seven or eight months to "make" his benefit.

From this moment benefit "making" was his fixed idea, and this was never lost sight of, for to him it was of vast importance, meaning new clothes for his business, something for out-door wear, a new wig or two, fresh tights, perhaps a pet sword, which had met his admiring gaze in a second-hand shop—the clearing up of the few odd debts necessarily incurred—and (if a married man) a week or two out of town for his wife and children; and last, but not least, the means of keeping him free from debt, whilst out of an engagement. These items, which may seem small now, were all-important at the time I speak of, for there were actors of position (and none but such ever had benefits), who rarely, if ever, received a salary upon which they could do more than live respectably and pay their way. I repeat, how, then, was this all-important benefit to be made? Often by considerable sacrifices of dignity, much hard work, and a settled determination that the benefit had "to be made."

All through the engagement the actor was compelled to work his hardest, so as to make himself popular with the general public; next his chance customers—people who hardly know him off the stage, must be allowed to pat him on the back and call him by his Christian name, and be generally familiar, but he must take no offence; next, he must never refuse an invitation, no matter how inconvenient it may be to him to accept; when in society he must make himself as agreeable as he possibly can; he must deal with as many tradesmen as he possibly can, taking care to offend none of the old ones, and yet making friends with the new; he must never receive a letter, the address of which is not put down in his note-book for a circular to be sent at the proper time; next, he must

play at as many benefits as he possibly can, so as to get a constituency from the other theatres; in fact, he must leave nothing undone to make himself as popular as possible both in and out of the theatre.

The results of this spell of hard labour are as varied as the means by which they are obtained. Sometimes the weather is fine, there are numerous out-door attractions, or, the manager "puts up his name" when there is some great attraction at a rival house, or (if in a manufacturing district) one of those unforeseen serious depressions in trade occur, and the results are "nil," or worse, a decided loss, so that after all the anxiety, labour, self-sacrifice, and expense he is left with nothing, and sometimes a considerable debt. This, of course, is only one side of the story, and perhaps rather an exceptional one; for, on the other hand, many popular country actors can depend upon an addition of nearly a hundred pounds a year to their incomes by the profit of their benefits.

The smaller "fry" of the profession often arrange with their managers for a benefit in the form of a "ticket night;" by this arrangement (which entirely secures them from loss) they are entitled to one half of the money obtained by the sale of tickets sold by their own exertions, and printed at their own expense. Of these "ticket nights," and also of "benefits," there are many stories well known to most members of the profession, but, as they may be new to the outer world, I will retail one or two of them.

In Liverpool, some few years ago, we had a very popular clown (now, alas! gone over to the majority), one "Ben" McCormack, "a fellow of infinite jest." On the occasion of his benefit, he asked Mr. S. M. Harrison, a well-known local author, to write a speech

for him. The speech began with "Motley is my only wear," etc., etc., and through the speech the word "motley" occurred very often. After the benefit, "Ben" was asked by the author how the speech went. "First rate, Mr. Harrison," said Ben; "they liked it very much, but there was a deuce of a lot about Mr. Motley in it, but not a word about poor Ben M'Cormack."

This is not a bad story about a ticket-night benefit.

A very impecunious member of a company in Dublin was about to have a "ticket" night (one half of all the tickets he sold to be his share). Hearing that there was to be a great billiard match between two well-known members of Trinity College, our friend thought this might prove a good chance for the sale of a few tickets. Wrapped in an old piece of newspaper, he had twelve dress circle, five upper boxes, ten pit, and about twenty gallery—the remaining stock of tickets he had had printed, and which he had not been able to sell, or even leave upon sale or return. Waiting patiently until the conclusion of the match, he rushed up to the victor, and after sundry congratulations, mentioned "that his benefit came off on Thursday," and that he "thought Mr. — might like a ticket or two." "What tickets have you?" asked the elated Irishman. "How many would you require?" said the actor. "Give me the lot," said the student; "how much are they?" "The whole lot!" inquired our friend: "why, they come to four pounds eight shillings!" "Here, then," said the victor, throwing down a five-pound note, "that'll make us square. I can't come, so I'll put 'em on the fire," doing so as he spoke. The actor gave a yell, and rushed to try and save them, but too late, and sitting down with a look of despair on his face, he said, "Good gracious,

sir! do you know what you've done? Why, I haven't paid for the *printing* of them yet!" He could not at the time realize that the entire five-pound note was his, minus the cost of printing—about one shilling.

Another, and perhaps better, story of burning benefit tickets, is told of a low comedian, who was very popular in one of the midland towns. At the time I speak of, the company only played three times a week. On the "off" nights some of them spent their time at a "free and easy" at the principal hotel, and sang and recited, and generally tried to make themselves popular. Our friend the low comedian was an especial favourite with the frequenters, and when his benefit was about to take place, he was asked to bring some tickets.

The Chairman for the evening then opened a list, and soon a goodly number of tickets were sold. The Chairman then rose and said, "Gentlemen, I believe Mr. —, whom we all so much admire, is bound to have a crowded house, therefore I propose that we (who have all taken tickets) should let him have the entire benefit of our small assistance—instead of letting the manager have half—I therefore propose that we one and all put the tickets on the fire." Upon which, amidst loud applause, he said, "There goes my ten shillings' worth." "There goes my five," said another; and so it went round the entire room.

"Gentlemen," said the low comedian, in a voice broken with emotion, "I hardly know how to thank you, but—I will *not* be outdone in generosity. You have destroyed seven pound ten's worth of my tickets. I will do the same." Upon which he counted out a packet of shilling tickets (only worth the paste-board and printing) and throwing them on the fire—left the room amidst loud applause.

But listen to this about a poor old clown.

A clown, for sake of his popularity and as an advertisement) is *bound* to take a benefit—in fact, it is always in his engagement. One poor fellow I met looked particularly radiant after his benefit. I asked him if I might congratulate him on the result of his benefit. He said, "You may, laddie; it's the best I've had for four years. *I only lost twenty-seven shillings.*"

And now one more to finish.

Actors always like playing a part out of

their usual line of business upon their benefits, therefore you often find a "heavy man" playing "light comedy" upon that especial occasion, and *vice versa*. Upon one occasion two men who played in Dog Pieces determined to change parts for this night only. But it ended in disaster—for whenever the "good young man" of the piece came on the dog flew at his throat, and when the villain was in the act of committing some dreadful crime the dog would insist upon licking his hand, and playfully wagging his tail.

OUR DOUBLES.

By S. B. BANCROFT.



THEN you never were in Rome, Mr. Bancroft?"

"Never. You seem surprised, Lady A—Why?"

"I'll tell you after luncheon," replied my hostess.

This conversation occurred, I remember, one day last May, just before the end of the revival of "Caste."

A little later I was in the drawing-room, turning over an album of photographs, when I came to an excellent likeness of Mrs. C——, the eldest daughter of the mistress of

the house. I asked where she was. My hostess said:

"In Rome, with her husband; and this letter, which I received from her last week, will tell you why I was surprised at your saying you had never been there, for I certainly thought 'Captain Hawtree' and 'Polly Eccles' had been taking a holiday. Read what Emily says on the last page."

As she spoke, Lady A—— handed me a letter, which she had taken from a writing-table, and I read this paragraph:

"By-the-bye, mother dear, do find out how we have offended the Bancrofts. We met them face to face the day before yesterday in the Piazza del Popolo, and they cut us dead—a ceremony which was most effectually repeated last night at the theatre. Jack is quite hurt about it, and so am I."

For a moment I was bewildered, then a light suddenly broke in upon me.

"My dear Lady A——," I said, "this is

more than vexing; pray tell Mr. and Mrs. C—— at once that neither Mrs. Bancroft nor myself have ever been in Rome, that we have acted every night since January, and that they must have seen *our doubles*."

"Your doubles!"

"Our doubles. Yes; there is an unexplained mystery here; and I am so perplexed with an indescribable doubt that I must tell you a little story—though that is hardly the word, for it is only the beginning of one. Who can tell how it will end?"

* * * *

"In the autumn of 1874, we had recommenced work at the little theatre, after a holiday abroad, when one day I received a letter from a debt-collector living in Camden Town, stating that he was instructed by Mr. —, the proprietor of the — Hotel, and also of some livery stables, at Ventnor, to apply to me for immediate payment of an account for the hire of carriages and horses in the previous September, while staying at the said hotel, and left unpaid when I went away. Having passed the whole of my holiday in Switzerland and Venice, and never having been in Ventnor in my life, I was a little puzzled by this application; at first, I thought it must be a practical joke, but eventually I answered the letter—rather angrily, I think—pointing out the mistake which had been made, and stating my real whereabouts at the time I was charged with driving about the Isle of Wight.

"From the debt-collector I heard no more. But one evening a few weeks later, when I had arrived at the theatre, and was reading some letters before dressing for the stage, the hall-porter knocked at the door of my room, said that a gentleman wanted to see me, and handed me a card.

"You may guess my surprise when I read

that my visitor was the proprietor of the — Hotel, Ventnor. I at once told the hall-keeper to show him into the green-room, which, so early in the evening, was unoccupied, and in a few minutes I went downstairs.

"'Good evening.'

"'Good evening, sir.'

"'You have asked to see me. I am Mr. Bancroft.'

"'So I see, sir,' said 'mine host' cheerfully, and with a decidedly provincial accent.

"I looked at him well—his face was frank and honest, and his manner self-possessed.

"'You have applied to me,' I next said, 'for money you say I owe you?'

"'Yes, sir; the amount remained unpaid when you left my hotel in September.'

"'When I left your hotel! Do you mean to assert that my appearance has not at once convinced you there must be some mistake?'

"'Not on my side, I think, sir.'

"'Do you mean to say,' I still asked—fairly amazed—'that you believe you recognize in me the person who owes you this money?'

"'I see no difference,' was the immediate reply, 'except that he had a moustache.'

"At this time, and throughout my holiday, my face was clean-shaven, for I was acting the part of 'Joseph Surface.'

"'Tell me something more of this,' I said; 'for your manner, at any rate, convinces me of your honesty.'

"'I thank you, sir,' replied my visitor, 'and, but for your straightforward denial, I would have sworn in any witness-box that you were the person who, with a lady, passed at my house for nearly a month as Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, of the Prince of Wales' Theatre.'

"Here, I thought, was my chance of convincing the man he had been imposed upon. I turned up the gas, directly under a large

photograph of my wife, and said, 'That is a portrait of Mrs. Bancroft.'

"My visitor rose, looked at it well, then said, 'Yes, and a very good likeness, too!'

"I was nearly paralyzed with amazement, and hardly remember what passed next, but I feel certain that the landlord—although his eyesight was throughout the interview my enemy—became as impressed by the honesty of my repudiation as I was by the frankness of his assertions.

"I learnt that our doubles had lived for a month on the best his house afforded; that at the end of their stay there was a little difficulty about the bill—they said they could not pay then, but would send the money from London, as the theatre was about to re-open (a statement which agreed with the newspaper advertisements), and that they must go.

"To this proposal 'mine host' naturally objected. Eventually, the man was allowed to depart alone, leaving the lady with her luggage to be redeemed. The money for the hotel bill, it seems, was sent in a few days, and the hostage released, the claim sent in to me being for carriage and horse hire which had been overlooked at the time, the livery-stable business being separate from that of the hotel.

"When at last my visitor went away he left, I feel assured, full of conflicting emotions, hardly knowing which of his senses he best could trust."

* * * *

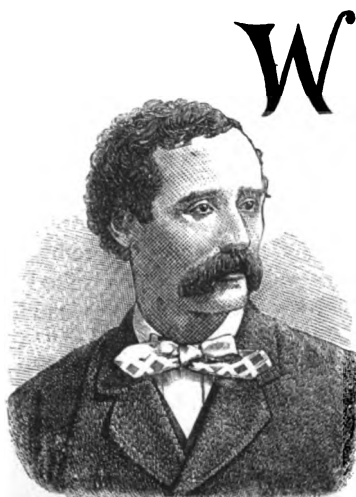
"My dear Mr. Bancroft," said my listener, when I had finished, "I wish there had been a shorthand writer in the room, for I shall never be able to tell all this to Emily when I try to explain that she only saw your ghosts. How extraordinary! Not merely a striking resemblance to *one* of you—but to *both*! I wonder if these people are still in Rome! What did you do?"

"Nothing. At first I resolved upon a warning advertisement to hotel-keepers in the *Times*, but thought afterwards that I would wait patiently until I heard of our doubles again. Until to-day not a word of them has reached me for more than four years. What other mischief has been done, I cannot say; at the least, you see that my credit has been tarnished, and the friendship of your daughter and her husband imperilled. Should any sequel happen, I promise you shall know it—whether I am sent for some day to a gaol to receive a penitent confession—whether *we* ever receive a legacy intended for *them*. Till then this little episode in but one way resembles an important story, it can only be "*concluded in our next.*"



THE WAIL OF A BANNER-BEARER.

BY ARTHUR MATTHISON.



WELL, what if I am only a banner-bearer? There's bigger blokes than me what begun as "supes," an' see where they've got to? *Why don't I get there?* Cause I ain't never

had the chance. You just let me get a

"speaking part," as soots me, that's all. Oh—it "*would be all*," eh? Why—but there! you're a baby in the purfession! you are! When you've been Captin' of the Guard, and Third Noble, and a Bandit Keerousin, and First Hancient Bard, and fourth in the Council of Ten, what listens to Otheller, and the Mob in the Capital, and a Harcher of Merry England, and a Peer of France, what doesn't speak, but has to look as if he could say a lot; when you've been all this, you may talk! *I needn't be offended?* All right, old pal; I ain't. Though I was 'urt when that utilerty cove said as I was only a banner-bearer. "Only!" Why I should like to know where they'd be without us—all them old spoutin' tragedy merchants! They'd have no armies, consequently they couldn't rave at 'em, and lead 'em on to victory and things. They wouldn't 'ave no sennits, so they'd 'ave to cut out their potent, grave, and reverent seniors—an' that 'ud worry 'em. They wouldn't 'ave no hexcited citizens, and so they couldn't bury old Ceser nor praise him neither. They couldn't strew no fields with no dead soldiers. They'd 'ave nobody to chivy 'em when they come to the throne, or return'd from the wars. They couldn't 'ave no percessions; as for balls, and parties, and tornemongs, why, they couldn't give 'em. And where 'ud they often be without the "distant ollerings" behind the scenes, allus a-comin' nerer and louder. Why, I remember a 'eavy lead one night, as had insulted his army fearful, at rehersal; he stops sudden, and thumps his brestplate, and says, "'Ark, that toomult," when there warnt no more toomult than two flies 'ud make in a milk-jug. We jest cut off his toomult, and quered his pitch in a minnit, for the laugh come in 'ot. We're just as much wanted as they are, make no error."

Only a banner-bearer! "Only," be blow'd. Oh, don't you bother, I ain't getting waxy. I'm only a standin' up for my purfession. What do you say? *They could do without me in the modden drarmer?* The modden drarmer, my boy, ain't actin'! It's nothing but "cuff-shootin'." You just has to stand against a mankel-shelf, with your hands in Poole's pockets, and say nothing, elergantly. You don't want no chest-notes; you don't want no action; you don't want no exsitement; you don't want no lungs, no heart, and no brain; only lungs an' soda, heart an' potash, brain an' selzer. Everything's dilooted, my boy, for the modden drarmer; and the old school, an' the old costumes 'ud bust the sides and roof too of the swell bandboxes, where they does the new school and the new costumes. *Praps I'm right?* Of course I'm right; and I'm in earnest, too! Why, my boy, if they was to offer me an engagement as a "guest," in one of them cuff-shootin' plays, and ask me to go on in evening dress, I'm blest if I wouldn't "throw up the part." Trousers and wite ties cramp me. I wants a suit o' mail an' a 'alberd; a toonic, and my legs free; a dagger in my teeth—not a toothpick; a battle-axe in my 'and—not a crutch. I likes to be led to victory, I does. I likes to storm castles, and trampel on the foe! I does. I likes to hang our banners on the outward walls, I does. I'm a born banner-bearer, I am, and I glories in it. No, my boy! none of your milk-and-water "guests" and such, for the likes of me! An' if I was the Lord Chambermaid, I'd perhibit the modden drarmer altogether. Them's my sentiments. If he don't perhibit it, actin' ull soon be modden'd out of existence; an' we shall 'ave Macbeth in a two guinea tourist suit, and Looy the Eleventh in nickerbockers,

on a bisykel. It's the old banner-bearing school as got us all our big actors, an' it stands to reason, my boy; for a cove *can't* spred hisself in a frock coat and droring-room langwidge. They're both on 'em too tame for what I calls real actin'. What! you *have heard say as us banner-bearers don't act—was only machines?* Well, some on us don't, p'r'aps, but some on us does, and no mistake.

You can't, as a rule, expect much feeling, much dignerty, much patriertism, or much simperthy for a shillin' a night. If they was all the real articles, they'd fetch a lot more than that; but there is gentlemen in my line as goes in for all four—reg'lar comes nateral to 'em. Why, I've been that work'd on when I've seen Joan o' Hark goin' in a perisher at the stake, an' makin' that last dyin' speech and confession of hers, that I've felt a real 'art beat against my property brest-plate, and felt real tears a tricklin' down to my false beard. I've been so struck with admirashun for some Othellos, that when they've been a addressin' of me as the sen-nit, I've felt as dignerfied as if I'd been the Doag of Venice hisself, and I bet I look'd it.

As for patriertism, there isn't a man living as has died for his country—willing, mind you—so often as I have; and I've strewed many a bloody field of batel with a earnest corpse, I have. An' as far as regards simperthy, it's stood in my way, for I've been that upset by Queen Katherines and Prince Arthurs, and even old Shylock (for Grashyano does giv 'im a doin'), and Ophelias, and other sufferin' parties, as I've often forgot my hexits and been fined a tanner; and if that ain't actin', I should like to know what is.

It's all very well for them noospaper crickets to harry us, and say as we're a set o' this and a set o' the other, and that we ain't

got no hideas. They wouldn't have many hideas, if they wasn't paid more than a shilling a night (with often twopence off to the hagent) for the use of 'em: the article's as good as the price, an' no mistake. Some on us gets a bit more, and accordin' some on us gives a bit more; for there's first heavy lead, and setterer, among the supes, just as there is among the princerples, don't make no error! *Have to do as the "stars" tell us?* Well, of course we does, only if the stars don't treat us like gents, we knows how to queer their pitches: rather! Why, it ain't so very long since as I was a-playin' a Roman Licktor in "Virginus," and when we was a rehersin' of it, 'im as play'd Happyus Clordyus called me a "pig." "All right," says I, "aside" like, "I'll 'pig' yer." Accordin', when night come, and he makes a exit in the third act, and says—didn't he enjoy hisself with it—"And I shall surely see that they reseve it!" he chucks his toger over his right shoulder, and turns round as magestick as a beedle to walk off—well, some'ow, just then I drops my bundle of sticks ("fusses," they calls 'em), all accidentle like, and Happyus Clordyus, with his heyes in the hair, comes to grief, slap over 'em. He was the un-happiest Clordyus all through that play as ever you see. What did he call me a "pig" for, the idiot?

"*Seem to be important, after all?*" Important! I should think we was! There couldn't be no big darmers without us, no gallant warryers, no 'owling mobs, no "Down with the tirants!" no briggands reposin', no 'appy pezzants, and no stage picturs of any account, if it warn't for the supes and banner-bearers, as ought to be made more on and seen to a bit better than they is; for what says the old sheeny in the play, 'im what old Phellups us'd to warm 'em up in? "What?" says he, "what! Hath Not a supe eyes,

'ands, horgans, somethin' else, and passions? fed with the same food?—(no! Shakey-old man, he ain't!) Well, if you prick us, don't us bleed? if we larf, don't you tickle us? and if you wrong us, ain't we goin' to take it out of you, like I took it out o' Happyus Clordyus?" *How I do mag?* Well, ain't it enough to make me? Don't let that 'ere utility cuff-shooter allood to me as "only a banner-bearer, then!" Let 'im, and all the others, treat us more respectful, and he and them too 'ull find a feeling 'art and good manners too, at even a shilling a night; though we could throw 'em in a lot more of both for an extra bob.—Good night, old man.

COMEDY AND TRAGEDY.*

By W. S. GILBERT.



IN 1745, Mdlle. Céline was "leading lady" at the Theatre Français. She was a very beautiful woman, twenty-five years old, and of irreproachable character, Mdlle. Cé-

line was only her stage name, inasmuch as she

* The author has taken steps to reserve to himself the right of dramatizing this story.

was the wife of Philippe de Quillac, late a lieutenant in the Royal Body Guard, and now an actor of small parts in the theatre of which his wife was a distinguished ornament. De Quillac was a young man of good family, and of some small fortune. He honestly fell in love with Céline while he was still a lieutenant in the army, and honestly married her, and as a consequence of this social down-step (for actors and actresses were held as little better than outcasts in those days), he had to resign his commission. Having nothing better to do, he took to the stage, for which, it must be admitted, he had no special talent. Nevertheless, his own industry, backed by his wife's influence, obtained for him an engagement at the Français—a consummation which he had earnestly desired to bring about, in order that he might be constantly at his wife's side. In truth, she stood greatly in need of a protector, for the Duc de Richelieu had condescended to make two distinct attempts to carry her away, as she left the stage door.

Her personal beauty, which was considerable, would probably have been insufficient of itself to incite that distinguished black-guard to take such determined steps. But her reputation as a spotless woman was a standing insult to him, and he made up his mind to avenge it. He laid siege to her in the orthodox fashion of those clumsy times. He sent her flowers, with notes in them. He composed immetrical quatrains in her honour. He obtained access to her at rehearsals, and delivered monstrous compliments, puffed out with complicated allegory. He was so obliging as to invite her to supper on many occasions, and on one occasion he carried his condescension so far as to offer to sup with her. These delicate overtures were a source of incessant irritation,

both to Céline and to her husband. De Quillac sent many challenges to the Duc de Richelieu, but they were treated with contempt. De Quillac was an actor, and it was impossible for a nobleman of Richelieu's rank to cross swords with him. Eventually Richelieu's attentions became more definite, and they finally culminated in two attempts to carry her off, as she was leaving the theatre after performance. These experiments were made, not by Richelieu himself, but by his servants, who, having no great interest at stake, allowed themselves to be readily defeated by De Quillac and other actors of the theatre.

These renewed insults, and the impossibility of bringing their instigator to account, rendered De Quillac's life intolerable, and at length he and his wife determined to lay such a snare for their distinguished enemy as would bring him fairly into De Quillac's power. To achieve this end, Céline gave out that as she found it impossible to get on with her husband, they had resolved to separate. She further explained that a life of respectability was rather a Quixotic end to aim at, and that she had resolved, thenceforward, to see a little more of the world, and to taste a little more freely of its pleasures; and to this sensible determination she was encouraged by the approval of many distinguished persons of both sexes, whose careers were so strictly in accordance with their proffered advice, that their good faith in giving it was placed beyond suspicion. The news quickly reached Richelieu's ears, and he, also, was pleased to compliment her, in an atrocious ode, on her extreme good sense. This was the more disinterested on his part, as his appetite for the chase was in direct ratio to the difficulty of the country, as he was candid enough to explain to her

in the last verse but one. That she might not, however, be unduly cast down by this information, he assured her, in the last verse, that he intended, despite the facilities that this new order of things seemed to promise, to renew his solicitations at an early opportunity. Céline intimated her determination to signalize her new method of life by a pleasant supper party, to which Richelieu, the Abbé Dubois, M. de la Ferté, and many other eminent debauchees of the Court of Louis XV., were invited.

The night of the supper arrived, and Céline received her guests in a *salon* on the ground floor of her hotel. She was, to all appearances, in admirable spirits, and received them with infinite good humour. Richelieu arrived last, and the frankness of her welcome, tempered as it was by a touch of profound respect for his exalted rank, seemed to him to be the very essence of good breeding. Supper was eventually announced, but at this stage Céline pleaded a headache, and on this plea contrived to remain behind. Richelieu, infinitely pained at the news, was so good as to offer to remain with her until she should feel well enough to rejoin her friends—an offer which Céline gratefully accepted.

Left alone with her, he, as a matter of course, condoled with her on her affliction, and suggested many remedies, which she pettishly rejected.

"Bah! Monsieur le Duc, are you so young a hand as not to understand that there are headaches for which a congenial *tête-à-tête* is the best remedy? These friends of yours—they worry me. They talk so much, and they do not talk well. I can listen to you, but not to them."

"I am infinitely flattered, Madame, at the compliment you are so good as to pay

me. I cannot doubt its good faith, for it is a conclusion that you have arrived at after some deliberation."

"You allude to the silence with which I have hitherto received your attention. You must remember that I was not a free agent. The acts of a woman who is embarrassed by the incessant presence of a jealous husband must not be judged too strictly. But there, he is gone, and I am to all intents a widow."

"You would have been a widow in very truth, long since, if I had found it possible to comply with his pressing invitations. But what could I do? Personally, I have the profoundest respect for his calling, but in my position I was helpless. Am I forgiven?"

And so saying, he took her hand affectionately in his.

"I did not desire his death, Monsieur, nor do I now. He has done for me all that was necessary; he has gone to Marseilles, and he has pledged his word that he will not return. Nay, Monsieur le Duc, be reasonable."

The Duke had placed his arm around her waist.

"You must make some allowance. I am hungry—here is a feast. Have I not said grace enough?"

"Nay, Monsieur, I cannot allow this. Remove your arm, I pray; your friends will be returning. If they should see us thus——"

"My friends will not return yet awhile, and when they do they will give us fair notice of their approach. Céline, I love you. Céline, I have waited long and patiently. Céline, I——"

At this point he looked over her shoulder, and saw, standing behind her, De Quillac, white and stern, with a drawn sword in his hand. The truth flashed upon Richelieu in a moment.

"This is a trap," said he.

"It is a trap," replied Céline.

"It is a trap," repeated De Quillac.

"For many months you have grossly insulted my wife, and, through my wife, myself. I have sent you challenge after challenge, but my messages were ignored by you. Inflamed beyond endurance at the many outrages you have dared to inflict upon us, we have devised this plan to get you into our power."

"And this is with your consent, Madame?"

"Entirely."

"What do you wish me to do?"

"Those doors lead to the garden. You must fight me there, to-night."

"And if I refuse?"

"I will kill you where you stand."

"But you are an actor, and, by your profession, proscribed. I cannot fight an actor."

"Monsieur, I have laboured long and wearily to attain the position which I have just achieved—that of a member of the Theatre Français. It has been the aim of my ambition, and that long-coveted reward has, within the last few days, been conferred on me. Here is my engagement, signed and sealed. By this act"—and here he tore the paper into two pieces—"I annul my engagement, and I pledge you my honour that under no circumstances will I ever appear on the stage again. Now, M. le Duc, I am no longer an actor, and you cannot refuse to meet me."

"Madame," said Richelieu, turning to Céline, "I have no desire to injure you or your husband. I have wronged you sufficiently, and I would willingly make amends. I implore you not to expose your husband to the danger he is courting."

Céline's lip quivered for a moment; it was for a moment only.

"Monsieur le Duc, you must fight my husband."

"Let me remind you," said the Duke, "that I am one of the most skilful swordsmen in France. Let me place distinctly before your eyes the fact that in going out with me your husband runs no risk, for he encounters a certainty. I implore you to use your influence to check him, if you have any regard for him, for if I cross swords with him, I assure you, on my honour, that I will kill him."

Céline was deadly pale, but her resolution did not desert her.

"Monsieur le Duc, you must fight my husband."

"Good. It shall be as you will. I make but one stipulation—that the fact that I have consented to meet an actor shall never be known to any but ourselves."

"You have my promise," said De Quillac.

"And mine," said Céline.

"Then, sir," said the Duke, "if you will be so good as to lead the way, I will do myself the honour to follow you."

De Quillac turned to his wife, and, taking her in his arms, kissed her fondly.

"I am ready, Monsieur," said he.

And the Duke and the actor went through the folding-doors into the garden.

At this point the full significance of the Duke's warning seemed to dawn upon her. The loss that she was, almost to a certainty, about to sustain—the knowledge that this great risk was undertaken on her behalf, with her consent, and almost at her instigation, destroyed the stern stuff of which the woman was made. She rushed to the door that had just closed.

"Philippe!—come back! for the love of Heaven, come back!"

It was too late, for, through another door came her guests, warmed with wine. With a supreme effort she assumed a thoughtless gaiety of carriage, and entered, almost recklessly, into the tone of *persiflage* which prevailed among those who had supped. She felt that it was impossible to be silent—she must say something, or do something incessantly, or her fortitude would assuredly break down.

"Come, Abbé, what shall we do? Have you nothing to propose? Shall we sing—dance—what shall we do? But be quick! I cannot bear delay. Suggest something, for Heaven's sake—"

Several suggestions were made. Each in turn was eagerly acquiesced in by Céline. At length some one recollected that Céline had a singular faculty for improvisation. Give her a suitable subject, and she would extemporize a poem upon it, in excellent rhymed Alexandrines. It was suggested that she should favour the company with an example of her remarkable facility in this respect.

"With pleasure—anything you please—give me a subject—quick! quick!—I cannot wait."

It was debated among the company whether the subject to be proposed should belong to the domain of comedy or of tragedy. Some were for one—some for the other. To Céline, it was a matter of indifference, so that the question was quickly settled. At length a gentleman present solved the difficulty by proposing that she should extemporize in comedy first, and in tragedy afterwards. Céline was ready—all that she waited for was a subject.

A comedy-subject was proposed. An unsuccessful lover had surreptitiously obtained access to his mistress's chamber in a woman's disguise.

It was enough. Céline, in the character of the lady, commenced her improvisation. She detected the imposture, and proceeded, in withering terms, to ridicule the contemptible device to which her suitor had resorted.

At this point, one of the guests—a Monsieur L'Estrange—exclaimed :

"Hush ! I pray your pardon for this interruption ; but I am certain I heard a sound of swords clashing in the garden."

"It is nothing, sir," said Céline. "My servants are amusing themselves. We are enjoying ourselves here—let them have their enjoyment also. It is nothing, I assure you."

She proceeded with the improvisation. She pointed out to her disguised lover how well a woman's garb befitted such a woman's soul as his, and recommended him to adhere to a costume which he carried with such address. Her manner was buoyant and defiant—perhaps a little too much so ; still everyone was delighted with the exhibition. At a critical point in the verse, L'Estrange, who had been listening at the garden-door, again interrupted her :

"Madame, I am bound to interrupt you again. The clashing of swords is distinctly audible. I am certain you cannot be aware of what is going on. You must permit me to examine the garden."

Céline rushed to the door, locked it, and withdrew the key.

"It is nothing, Monsieur, I assure you. You must not enter the garden. The fact is, that I am preparing a little surprise for you all, and if you go into the garden at this moment, you will destroy everything. Pray permit me to continue."

So saying, she gave the key of the door to the physician to the theatre, who happened to be among the guests, enjoining him,

at the same time, not to part with it on any consideration.

She attempted to resume her improvisation, but she found it difficult to take up the thread at the point at which it had been broken. It was, in truth, a struggle between comedy and tragedy, and tragedy had the best of it, for a loud exclamation, as from a man in acute pain, broke upon her ear, and her resolution gave way at once.

"Gentlemen, I cannot go on. It is useless to attempt to disguise my agitation from you. You must see that I am terribly overwrought. Gentlemen, for the love of Heaven, interfere to save my husband. He is in that garden, engaged in a duel with the Duc de Richelieu ! The shriek that we all heard was his—he is dying—perhaps dead ! For God's sake interfere to save him, if it be not too late !"

And so saying, she endeavoured, but vainly, to break open the door which she had so recently locked.

At first the guests were alarmed, till they recollected that the exhibition of comedy was to be succeeded by one of tragedy, and they concluded that this was but the fulfilment of the second half of her promise.

"Admirable ! What passion—what earnestness !" and a round of applause rang through the room.

"Gentlemen, pray do not mock me. I am not acting ; I am in earnest. My husband is dying, perhaps dead. For Heaven's love, help him while there is yet time !"

A murmur of admiration was the only reply that this appeal elicited. The spectators were as men spell-bound.

"Doctor, you have the key ; I gave it to you. I love him. He is in deadly peril. Give me the key, I say, give me the key, or I shall die !"

It was agreed by all present that Céline had surpassed herself—that is to say, by all but one.

"Gentlemen," said the Doctor, "this lady is not acting; she is in earnest. See, her colour comes and goes."

"Nonsense, Doctor! Madame is acting, and acting admirably. Strange that so old a hand as you should be deceived."

"It would be strange indeed if I were deceived, but I am not. I take upon myself to believe that she is in mortal earnest, and in that belief I shall comply with her wish."

Undeterred by the ridicule with which his resolve was received, he went to the door and unlocked it. Céline rushed eagerly towards it, when she saw, standing in the open doorway, her husband, pale, stern, and unwounded.

A few hurried whispers passed between them.

"You are safe?"

"I am."

"And the Duke?"

"Wounded to the death."

With a great effort she recovered her presence of mind, and taking her husband's hand, led him forward.

"This, ladies and gentlemen," said she, "is the little surprise of which I spoke. I am delighted to think that my attempt at improvised tragedy has met with your cordial approval."

A prolonged round of applause followed this announcement. It was admitted on all hands that, admirably as she had shone in Comedy, it was in Tragedy that she carried off the palm.

THE MYSTERIOUS CUSTOMER.

By J. L. TOOLE.



MANY years ago, there was a very popular song in London called "The Gay Cavalier." It was adorned with a wonderful picture of a Charles the Second gallant, all-feathered hat,

bulgy boots with lace ruffles tacked on to them, a lot of effeminate curls, and a tremendous sword decorated with ribbons. He had sneaked up a rope-ladder to serenade the idol of his affections, and seeing that she was a married woman, it was very foolish of the gay cavalier to leave his gloves behind him. The husband discovered the gloves, and that was the dramatic situation of the song.

I remember the ditty began, "'Twas a gay cavalier to a bower drew near, his lady to *ser-en-ade!*" but every other second came a doleful wail over the "glo-o-oves that never belonged to me!" They make a good many complaints, but I think that they write better songs than that now-a-days, and manage to favour the warbling actor with more metrical effusions. Did you ever hear the "'Orrible Tale," or "Obadiah"?

The old song reminds me, however, that I

have a story about some gloves "that never belonged to me." Some of my critics say that long-fingered Berlin gloves play very many powerful parts in my repertoire ; but I will let that pass. There must be jealousy and envy in this wicked world. Many a good laugh have I got out of a good long-fingered greengrocer's glove as a muddled and a puzzled waiter ; but, bless you, it is not the glove that gets the laugh, but the art that arranges the fingers into comic attitudes. So long as the public laughs I shall stick to the gloves, so long as they stick to me. In the present case they did not stick to me at all, and hence my story.

I was out of gloves, and my fame as a low comedian was threatened with extinction ; for what could I do—hear this, O my critics—with any conceivable farce without the assistance of some comic gloves ?

You shall hear. No, joking apart, I was really out of gloves. Just listen. In "Artful Cards"—you know the piece—capital funny play by Burnand—trick act, and all that kind of thing. Well, I was playing Mr. Spicer Rumford in "Artful Cards," and you know in the second act he goes to an evening party, and he has bought a pair of white kid gloves. Burnand is far too observant an author to think of writing a play for me without gloves in some shape or other. This time they are aristocratic gloves—white kid—no greengrocer's pattern or Berlin material—regular party-going gloves, warranted not to split, at one-and-six. But they do split, and here is the fun of the introduction of those comical articles called hand-shoes by the matter-of-fact Germans. By-the-by, I imitate the music of the prominent instrument in a German band in that farce, and parade the streets with a melancholy trombone.

But to resume, I am always rushing off at a tangent. I have really got so much in my head, that I am bound to let it off occasionally.

The gloves were necessary for the fun of the play ; they must be split, or there is no fun ; and I usually keep a dozen pairs ready in case of emergency, as I have to split them before going upon the stage.

When acting in a celebrated provincial town, where they are extremely critical and particular down to the smallest detail, my dresser told me that I had no gloves ; I had used them all. I told him it was all right, I would bring some down from my box at the hotel ; but on my way to the theatre the next night, I suddenly remembered that I had forgotten the gloves.

It was a dreadfully wet night, pouring cats and dogs, and all the best shops were shut up ; so I told the coachman to stop at the first glove-shop he came to. We came to a halt at a miserable-looking fourth-rate shop, where they sold cheap braces and mouldy neckties, fly-blown shirts, and the most alarming brass studs fixed into card-board. The socks looked as if they had been knitted in the year one, and there was a thick layer of dust on the cotton pocket-handkerchiefs displayed on the chairs, and bearing upon them the coloured pictures of winners of the Derby and the Oaks ten years ago. I often wonder who buys those sporting handkerchiefs. They are not used in farces.

The proprietor of this dingy emporium was just about to close, and seemed half-asleep. I could see at once he was a surly, ill-conditioned fellow, and I don't think I improved his temper by making my request very earnestly and in a low tone, accompanied by gibberish which he could not understand.

My earnestness impressed him, but not one word could he comprehend.

I heard him muttering to himself, "What does he mean? the man's a fool." When suddenly, as he was bouncing about and losing his temper, I said, as distinctly as possible, "Have you got any white kid gloves? I don't understand your provincial dialect."

It was as well to turn the tables at once, and put him in the wrong.

He did not know whether he had any gloves, but he would see. So he groped about in a silly, aimless fashion, opening boxes of socks, neckties, under jerseys, braces, and everything but gloves, until at last, when he was red with the exertion, he found a forgotten box of white kids. They were uncommonly dusty, and had evidently been the original stock of his grandfather's shop. I picked out a pair, and he went through the stupid old formula of doubling them across my knuckles. I never found that prevented them from ripping open at the thumb during a mazy dance, or splitting at an evening party.

"I think these will do," he said.

"Oh! will they? then give me a pair of scissors."

"They are untied; you don't want any scissors."

"Yes, I do."

I then deliberately cut the gloves in five or six places. The man positively shuddered, and said, "Oh, don't!" It seemed to hurt him, although the gloves were mine. The more he shuddered, the more I cut away.

"But I could have got you a larger pair without that," he whined, as if he were in dreadful pain.

"They are quite large enough, my dear sir," I replied, hacking away; "but I like plenty of ventilation."

He shuddered again.

"Give me another pair!" I said, fiercely, as if I were thirsting for destruction.

"Will you have a larger size? Do," he murmured. "Don't hurt them," he added, with real pathos.

"No!" I said, melodramatically. "Give me some larger scissors!"

I saw a large pair of scissors on the counter, and seizing them, cut away at two or three pair as eagerly as a child cutting up paper. The more I cut, the more puzzled and distressed he looked.

"There, that will do," said I, throwing down the money and pocketing the gloves.

"Will you have any paper? Oh! dear!" he roared, as if the scissors had been ripping *him* open, and he was recovering from the shock!

"No, indeed, not I. Belinda shall be revenged!" I groaned between my teeth. "Thus will I destroy my hated rival."

He backed away from me as I waved the scissors in the air, and I could see by his terrified face that he thought I was stark staring mad. As I was leaving the shop I looked out and said,

"It's a lovely morning, isn't it?" It was seven o'clock in the evening, and raining in torrents.

"Don't talk nonsense, sir," he replied angrily, but evidently very frightened and astonished.

With a hideous grimace I left the shop, and jumped into the carriage. In five minutes I was at the theatre, trying to amuse the audience with the perplexities of Mr. Spicer Rumford, while the puzzled shopman was brooding in the little back parlour over this strange adventure with his "Mysterious Customer."

MY ANTI-CLIMAX.

BY J. ASHBY-STERRY.



SOME years ago, I gave what I was pleased to denominate an "Entertainment." Rude people said the audience looked upon it in another light.

But no matter. I

had a good deal more time on my hands than I have now-a-days, and I derived the keenest amusement from the whole affair, from beginning to end. If it was not an entertainment to my audience, it was a source of intense diversion to myself. It was formed on the lines of Albert Smith's famous Mont Blanc lectures. There was music, and there were patter-songs, and there were dioramic views. The trouble I had over the latter and the arrangement of a portable proscenium, I shall never forget. I was my own stage-carpenter and scene-painter, though I had many valuable hints from an amusing old gentleman, one Muffmothy, who had been connected with the property-room at Covent Garden, who used to come of an evening, do a deal of hammering, tell many theatrical anecdotes, and imbibe much brandy and water.

I called the show, "Autumn Leaves from a Tourist's Note-Book," and it was, as you may imagine, a merry chronicle of a holiday

trip through France, Switzerland, and Italy; with sketches of character; and considerable fun made out of the travelling English. There were plenty of songs, which were set to popular tunes, and there was lots of music excellently played by a dear old friend of mine, who presided at the piano. I do not think I made much money out of the affair, as, by way of getting the thing well started, I gave it for the benefit of the funds of several country literary institutions. Though I did not make much money by the project, I had no end of fun. I think I never had such a merry time in my life, and in those days one generally managed to get two shillingworth of enjoyment out of sixpence. The ancient, decaying, mildewed literary institutions, with their solemn committees, would make a chapter of themselves.

The entertainment itself was in two parts, and I was warned by an old literary friend to be sure and make my second part the strongest. Said he, "Let the affair be like a squib, brilliant throughout, but let it finish with a bang. Let people be anxiously wishing for more, and then let them find to their surprise that your entertainment is finished. You must have no dying away or tailing off. *Beware of all things of an anti-dimax.*" I had a rehearsal before leaving London, but I am bound to say the thing went very badly. The scenery did not work well, the jokes were not appreciated. Then there was something wrong about the lighting. The songs did not seem to take. My friends shook their heads a good deal, and they tendered all sorts of advice at great length—which I did not take—and predicted a terrible failure.

But I was announced for the 17th of February at the Chunkleton Literary Institution, and there was no backing out of it. It was with dismal forebodings that I arrived at the town, and I was in the lowest of spirits when I was superintending the erection of my proscenium at the hall of the society. Never was the actor's proverb, "It'll be all right at night," more fully realized. The thing went off with a bang. It was a success from beginning to end, the laughter was continuous, and the applause terrific.

Things went on swimmingly till I reached Titterton. Now, at Titterton I counted on my greatest success, as I have many influential friends there and thereabouts. They had canvassed the neighbourhood; crafty anticipatory paragraphs had been inserted in the *Titterton Times*, the fame of the entertainment had been judiciously noised abroad, and I was delighted to see that "Autumn Leaves" was placarded all over the town, and small hand-bills with regard to the same might be seen in every shop-window. I was staying at Daynton Hall, in the neighbourhood. There was a large dinner-party the night before, and every one told me that everybody was going to the show, and that there was not a place to be had for love or money. Late at night I had a telegram from Muffmothy, saying that he was taken ill, and could not come down to work the scenery. This was unfortunate, but Dick Daynton kindly volunteered to fill his place. Dick was a capital hand at theatricals, and he thoroughly entered into the fun of his first appearance as scene-shifter.

Titterton Town Hall was crammed; the reserved seats were full. There was the Mayor of Titterton in all his glory; there was the Daynton Hall party occupying two

rows: there was Lord Tenniscourt and the Misses Racquets; there was old Colonel Crackerdoom; there was Sir Benjamin Bunridge, the member for the county; there were the Asper Ewshalls; there was that ancient and amusing dowager Lady Moocow and graceful Miss Claravere, the prettiest girl within fifty miles: in short, there were all the best people in and about Titterton. The two-shilling seats were crammed, and there was not standing room in the shilling gallery at the end of the hall. It was the largest audience I ever had, and the most enthusiastic. I felt their pulse, so to speak, and they seemed to be with me directly I started.

How they applauded the song "Going Across," which detailed the miseries of the Channel passage; how the description of the visitors at Lucerne seemed to fetch them; and did they not welcome my picture of sunset on the Lago Maggiore, with all its chrome and vermilion, as it had never been welcomed before? When I introduced a few sly hits at a certain "right of way" case that had recently been agitating the township, there was a roar of laughter; and when I described the peaks, passes, and glaciers, and view generally from the Rigi Kulm, in a song to the tune of the "Cork Leg," the applause was terrific. This brought me safely to the conclusion of the first part, and I retired for ten minutes for refreshment and talk with Dick Daynton behind the scenes.

"Capital! old man. You've fetched them like a snipe," said Dick—who was always somewhat confused in his metaphors—as, in the middle of a whirlwind of applause, I retired from public gaze. "You must be pretty well done, I should think? What's it to be?" he added, flourishing a corkscrew at

a perfect buffet of bottles that he had arranged for my refreshment.

"Guinness, by all that's sustaining!" I answer.

And in two minutes there was a popping of corks, and a couple of silver tankards were foaming to the brim.

"I can now understand," said Daynton, "how it is that stage carpenters are always in a chronic state of thirst. It's precious hot, and dry, and anxious work looking after your *coulisses*, I can tell you."

All this time Willy Grame was filling up the interval with most delightful music, excellently played. Under my special instructions, he was to eschew the classical, and keep strictly to the popular. The result was that feet were steadily beating time, and every head was nodding to the tune throughout the room. I often used to think that Grame's portion was by far the best part of the entertainment. On this occasion he was better than usual. He wandered from one popular tune to another, and at last he struck merrily into the "Burlesque Galop." This was too much for Dick. He seized his tankard, and away he went,

Rumty-dumty, dumty-dum,
O rumty-dumty day!

It was too much for me; my coat was off in a minute, and away I went, with my

Rumty-dumty, dumty-dum,
And rumty-dumty d-a-a-e-e!

Daynton was an excellent dancer; he had been two years in Paris, and he was a very Brididi at the *can-can*. We flung our legs about *à la Vokes*, and thoroughly entered into the spirit of the absurdity. After one of Dick's wildest *pas*, I sank exhausted on a chair, and roared with laughter. Then we heard a most terrific round of applause. I

looked up, and, to my horror, found that from the shilling gallery at the end of the room they could see right over my proscenium, and that the occupants had a full view of the extraordinary and outrageous gambols of my friend and myself. I could see that every face was agrin, and that they had apparently been enjoying the whole performance tremendously.

I looked at my watch; the ten minutes was just up. The music ceased for a moment. Willy Grame then played a few bars of "Beautiful Venice," and I re-entered to relate my Venetian experiences. As I said before, my second part was much the strongest; but, strange to say, it fell flat. My imitation of the *gondolieri*, accompanied by a *patois* song, which nobody ever understood, but which was, therefore, generally a great hit, met with little encouragement; my humorous remarks anent the "pigeons of Venice," albeit intermixed with some sly hits at the "pigeons of Titterton," scarcely raised a laugh. My pet picture of the Piazzetta by moonlight, with a practicable moon and practicable gas-lights all along the quay, and a lamp-lit gondola with a red curtain, which generally drove country audiences frantic with delight, was but faintly welcomed. My patter song, "Sterry-o-scopic Views," which was a rapid summary of my tour, introducing most of the popular airs of the day, and songs in French, German, and Italian, was but moderately applauded; and I made my bow and disappeared, quite convinced that the latter part of my entertainment was a ghastly failure.

As I was retiring, I heard, amid the faint applause, some one in the gallery shout, "Dance! dance! why don't he give us the dance?" It then struck me the reason of the coldness. In the whole of my second

part, strong though I thought it to be, there was nothing so amusing and so uproariously comic as the frantic *pas de deux*, in which Dick Daynton and myself had indulged in behind the scenes. The gallery had probably looked upon this as a rehearsal, and were disappointed that it was not eventually included in the programme. I had quite unwittingly converted the whole of my second part into an anti-climax.

I was telling this circumstance to Muff-mothy on my return to town, and he said, "Jest what I told you, sir. If you'd have given 'em the Lancashire clog-dance, in character, between the parts, why you'd have made a terrific success everywhere!"

BEHIND THE SCENES.

BY KATE MUNROE.



SOME of my brothers and sisters in their varied and various communications may have been romantic, some poetical, and some personal. I intend to be practical, and to discuss a grievance. "Just look at this, just look at that!" My editor has given me leave to select my own subject; so, don't be

frightened, I am going to take you behind the scenes. It is very dark; shall I give you my hand—there, that's better.

When you go to the theatre, kind reader (I believe that is the proper way to address the public in a periodical), and see the actors and actresses in their pretty costumes and bright smiles (or the contrary), do you know or think of, or heed, the dungeons of heat, dirt, and evil smells from which they have just emerged, and where they have had to prepare themselves for the difficult encounter?

Most of these artists (I am speaking now of what the French call the "*premiers sujets*") are in the receipt of good salaries, and enjoy pleasant and comfortable homes; yet at the theatre, where they are obliged to spend a third of their lives, they are cooped up in small dens, without ventilation, and generally in the vicinity of a defective drain; their dressing-rooms, as they are called, are overheated with gas, and without any comfort except such as the artists may provide for themselves. Of course they may make their rooms as luxurious as they please; and in Paris the dressing-rooms are very "*coquette*," with bright hangings, mirrors, and easy-chairs; but ventilation and drainage can only be attended to by the managers, and it seems a poor economy which fails to attend to these things if the parish sanitary authorities refuse to do so, and thus encounter the risk of a favourite artist falling ill during the "*successful run*" of a piece. And this is not all; for, in addition to these discomforts, the ventilation is artfully arranged to carry currents of fresh air just where they are not wanted, and consequently the artists are exposed to frightful draughts on leaving their hot dressing-room or the stage.

In Paris, where I have been acting lately, there is rather a good plan of having heavy

curtains to all the doors about the stage, so that in case they are left open (and they generally are) the draught is partially avoided, and it also serves to muffle the sound of talking and laughing which, I am sorry to say, sometimes disturbs the peace and calm of well-ordered discipline "behind the scenes." Now don't laugh like that, I am not guilty. What do you say about "Qui s'accuse?" Do be quiet, and let me be practical.

The Theatre Français, in Paris, is the only theatre I know of where the artists are really at home, as they should be in a place where they pass so much of their lives. There the stage, the green-room, the corridors, and the dressing-rooms are all heated, ventilated, and lighted properly. The corridors are *carpeted*—think of that, fair camarades, imagine the bliss of being able to let the train of your dress fall, even by accident, without the heartrending certainty that it is "smudged," perhaps quite spoiled, by an instant's contact with the floor. Outside each dressing-room, in the corridor, are large cupboards where the artists keep their wardrobes for the different pieces in their repertoire; a circumstance that will account for the vexation of the artists of the Comedie Française, who were much wroth and generally cross at having the trouble of carrying backwards and forwards their costumes from the Gaiety Theatre, London. I must confess that the advantages of having a proper place to keep one's clothes in, recommends itself to the most careless of my sex. But we who act generally have to hang most of our street costume on one nail, the cloak and bonnet going to swell the pyramid, and the whole plentifully sprinkled with

white powder and dust. If we want our dressing-rooms kept fairly clean, it is only to be done by sending our own servants down to the theatre, or by heavy "tips" to one of the "dressers." It would be better if London managers adopted the Paris fashion of giving good-sized, well-ventilated rooms, and allowed each artist to bring her own furniture.

The success of all artists depends upon their having their brains clear, and being more or less physically comfortable, but it is impossible to have a clear brain in a vitiated atmosphere, or to exhibit much elasticity without even the preliminary comfort of an easy-chair.

But this is not all. The light is atrocious, and ridiculously arranged. My patient public, do not blame us if we come before you with cheeks as ghastly as a ghost or as red as a tomato, or a frightful dab of powder on our nose, for it is difficult to fix the colours properly, when one is standing in the full blaze of two glaring gas-burners, the heat causing the white and the red and the black to run together, and the cheeks getting flushed, and requiring copious "puffs" of white powder to cool them. This is generally the moment that the call-boy takes occasion to shout, "stage waits," and we dart madly away, warm and "*streaky*." These and many other woes do we endure, night after night, submissive and hopeless.

Will no one come to our rescue? or must we be put off with the old excuse—that it is all the fault of the amiable architect and the irresponsible builder. That won't pay our doctor's bill, or get us a new engagement.

There! I have had my say. I have uncorked the vials of my wrath.



EARLY EXPERIENCES.

BY THOMAS THORNE.



I AM not egotistical enough, old friend, to conceive for a moment that my initiatory doings or sufferings as an actor, will in any way be of important interest to your readers; but

I trust that the recital of two or three memoranda in a not wholly unchequered life may be sufficiently amusing to credit me with a place in your interesting theatrical collection.

From the very first moment that I trod the boards, at a small theatre in the North, and at the mature and thoughtful age of sixteen, I was made master of the truth of the maxim, "There is no royal road to learning." If I was enthusiastic, I was, at all events, unambitious, and did not immediately aspire to play "Othello," or stalk the stage as Hamlet. On the contrary, when relegated to the unobtrusive part of the second nameless gentleman in the first-named tragedy, I did not demur, but hastened to study my one line (for the rest of the part was cut out), which was merely:

Second Gent.: "Tis one Iago, ancient to the General."

You may smile when I write that I "studied" one line; but it is a fact—

humiliating, perhaps—that I sat up all the night previous to the performance endeavouring to master my first spoken words on the stage. At rehearsal I was "letter-perfect"; but at night a terrible nervousness befell me, and my memory, nearly my speech, forsook me. In answer to the question, "How now? who has put in?" I managed to stammer out, "'Tis our Iago, general agent to his majesty"—at least, that was what it sounded like to the audience. I must add that my costume did not appear with greater *éclat*; my personal wardrobe consisted of a pair of "tights" (more often a misnomer), and a wig which was perfectly kaleidoscopic in colours. It varied its tint according to the requirements of the part. I chalked it for old men, I sprinkled it with red-ochre for comic country parts, I cleaned it and wore it (a light brown) for quiet do-nothing guests, and blacked it for villains and scowling smugglers.

My figure was as meagre as my stage wardrobe, and whether the costumes refused to fit me, or I was incapable of being fitted by them, will always be a debateable point.

I was not, however, the solitary offender in the company. On one occasion, being short of hands, a little fellow, the pantomime clown of the theatre, was "cast" to play a messenger in the fifth act of "Macbeth." He was a nervous man, and unfortunately possessed a miserably squeaking voice, which naturally would contrast ridiculously with the thunder tones of the "star" tragedian. On his entrance, the unhappy pantomimist perceived in the character of Macbeth a huge trumpet-tongued Scotchman, who,

after using the extremely improper language of the text, roared—

“Where got'st thou that goose-look?”

The terrified clown got out—

“There is ten thousand——”

Macb. (roaring and shaking him): “*Geese? Villain!*”

To which the squeaking reply was—

“Yes! if you please, sir!”

I believe that the preliminary line referred to was repeated by the discomfited tragedian with more than the usual unction and personal application.

One more story, and I have done. It relates to a certain performance of “*Hamlet*,” which, for an accident which therein occurred, was of infinite importance to me. The first low comedian naturally was “cast” for the principal gravedigger, and proceeded with the part up to the end of his scene, when he disappeared down the “grave-trap,” and the boards closed over him. At the conclusion of the performance, however, he never re-appeared; no one had seen him leave the stage, and he had certainly not left the theatre. A careful search was accordingly made for him, but to no purpose. He was not to be found. His part in the farce had to be read by the second low comedian. I went on for the second comic part, and thereby earned my promotion, for from that time I quitted the unnamed noblemen of the Shakespearian drama for ever. We all dispersed that night in great excitement and perturbation. On the next morning the quest was renewed, and, ultimately, the first gravedigger was discovered in the vaults of a contiguous public-house, which were under the stage, and on the contents of the cellar he had incontinently levied. I suppose he was the only gravedigger that was ever buried with Ophelia.

AN ADVENTURE IN A CAR.

BY MRS. JOHN WOOD.



MY first and only journey to New Orleans never shall I forget. I was on the eve of closing a really delightful engagement with Mr. Joseph Jefferson, at the Winter GardenThe-

atre, New York, and New Yorkers thought I was going to settle in their midst, when, lo my last nights were announced in letters as long as myself. I am proud to say everybody was furious, including the manager, that Thalia Matilda (a pet name given me by the critic of the *New York Herald*) should be taken off *South*; Mr. Adolphus Davenport, or Dolly, as he was familiarly called, being also engaged to support me in the parts we had performed together in New York. The papers began to notice our coming journey, and were exquisitely funny about it, at poor Dolly's expense. “Ah!” said they, “happy Dolly! *he* will have the management of her boxes all to himself; *he* may have the happiness of carrying her keys; *he* may be allowed to hold her railway ticket,” and a hundred remarks of this sort, to say nothing of the jokes of his brother actors. Every night the poor man left the theatre they would say, “Now,

Dolly, mind you take care of the 'Queen of Comedy and Song ;'" "Mind you look after her wardrobe, her music," etc., etc., until poor Dolly was goaded on to say at last his belief was he was going as a footman and not as an actor at all.

This fun was kept up until we started for New Orleans, escorted to the station by a crowd of actors, managers, critics, and friends, and I can see again, as I recall the scene, a hundred well-known faces, cheering on even unto the end. My heart went out to them in sheer gratitude, and so we started. We travelled until midnight, when a change of trains took place. The passengers happened to be all ladies, except one white-haired old gentleman. I noticed him, as Mr. Davenport spoke and shook hands with him on leaving the car for the smoking carriage. Having previously begged Dolly to take charge of my through ticket, my purse, in fact, all valuables that I had with me, being afraid I might lose them, I settled down to sleep. It must have been three or four hours later, I was suddenly awakened by the guard howling for my ticket. I informed him a gentleman in the smoking car had mine, and he would hand it to him. He went on; presently he returned, bawling out, "There's no gentleman got any ticket for a lady here," and he'd trouble me "not to fool him any longer."

I remonstrated mildly, and assured him the gentleman was in the smoking carriage, pointing to where Mr. Davenport had gone.

"There's no cars that way," says he; "they were all shunted at the last place an hour ago."

"Good heavens!" said I; "then the unhappy Dolly has been carried off in his sleep to unknown parts."

"Well, you'll have to get out," says the monster.

"But I am here without ticket or money, in a strange place; what am I to do?"

"Oh, you can't play that off on me," said the ogre. "I've heard all that before, how gentlemen have ladies' tickets, and are asleep in the next car; you'll have to tell that story to the station-master," and off he went.

What *was* I to do? I would pretend to be asleep, and refuse to wake. So I covered my head with a woollen scarf; it nearly suffocated me, but I could see through it without being seen. Presently I saw the guard talking to the white-headed old gentleman. Both talked in an excited manner, and looked towards me. "Oh, dear!" thinks I, "I am settled, for sure. What will become of me?" Soon after, daylight came, the demon guard still hovering near. I was expecting to be handcuffed the moment I stirred. I was faint from being covered up, and parched with thirst, but nothing could move me. The train began to slacken speed, the vendors of fruit ran alongside, but I had no money to buy any with. I was being waited for, to be turned out of the train. I was really frightened. Then came the awful moment; the train stopped—the ten minutes for refreshment was at hand—the passengers all gone. I waited, breathless. No guard. Another moment, and I said to myself, "I will spell *r-e-s-o-l-u-t-i-o-n* very slowly, and if he doesn't come, I'll take off my covering." I did so. He was not there. I opened the window, grateful for some air. I looked out upon a wilderness; and when I turned round again, there was the ogre, cap in hand, bowing before me—sarcastically, of course, I thought. I couldn't speak, but I felt I gave him a look that said, "I am hungry and friendless; what are you going to do with me?" He smiled. "Oh! if I only had a property pistol to frighten him," I thought.

"Well," said I, "are you going to put me on the side-walk?"

"Why, no, Mrs. Wood," said he; "and if I had only known it was you at first, it would have been right from the word 'go.'"

He then explained that the white-headed old gentleman had told him before he got out that I *had* come with a gentleman, that I was Mrs. John Wood, that the gentleman was Mr. Dolly Davenport, and that we were going to act at the Varieties Theatre, New Orleans; that he, the ogre, had been in several times (didn't I know it?), but, as I was so fast asleep, he waited about, not liking to disturb me.

Oh, joy! I could have hugged the monster; he was so polite; anything he could get me, he would.

"But I have no money?" said I.

"Oh! money is no object," said he.

"Isn't it?" said I. "Then I ought to have been left here long ago."

Refreshments were speedily brought, and I blessed that old gentleman for telling the ogre who I was. It had never occurred to me to do so. Presently my friend the ogre returned, saying he went no further than that station; but they had telegraphed on; and he assured me I should be looked out for and taken care of. I blessed him silently, and asked for his name and address; and I am happy to think he heard from me when he least expected it, and when he was in a greater fix than I was then. I felt a pang at parting from my benefactor; but, true to his promise, at the next station, sure enough, I was met with an ovation which was truly appreciated, and will never be forgotten by the Unprotected Female.

Arriving at Savannah, I was determined to say who I was, at once; so, sending for the proprietor of the hotel, who came directly I

was about to announce myself with very great dignity, when he quietly said, "Mrs. John Wood, I presume."

I sat down as though I had been suddenly hit; and to this day I always feel humble when I am informed who Mrs. John Wood is.

"But where is my friend Dolly?" said he. "He wrote me from New York, saying when you would be here, and to have rooms prepared for you."

I could only repeat to him what had happened.

"Ah!" said he, "the same thing often occurs, and loving families are parted for days."

"Good gracious!" thinks I, "is this a plan between the railway company and the hotel to keep people here? No! perish the thought! Such things are *never* done."

"But the boat leaves to-morrow," said I, "and not another word for a week. Dolly *must* be found."

With this he left the room, saying he would find him, if he was *alive*!

Oh, what I suffered! The night passed—no news of him. Early next morning, a telegram arrived, saying, "*Will be in time for boat.—Yours distractedly, DOLLY.*"

I flew to the proprietor, but he was out telegraphing in every direction. About an hour before the boat started they both appeared—Dolly pale, the hotel-keeper red and triumphant. Of course, Dolly had been taken off in his sleep; on waking up and discovering his position, he insisted upon the train being stopped, and his being put out there and then; and he was very much *put out* when he saw train after train pass by without noticing him. Then his despair knew no bounds, and became of such a nature, that the next train actually stopped. The sight of a gentleman standing on his head probably first attracted

the guard's attention, who, on closer observation, finding two first-class tickets stuck in the hat beside him, had him promptly secured, and placed in the train. Dolly was evidently thought to be hopelessly insane, and consequently was placed in a carriage all by himself. He could make no one hear, neither could he find out to what place he was being taken. However, it turned out he was all right for Savannah. He telegraphed from the first station, paid for it *with my money*. "His loose cash," he said, "must have all fallen out in his desperate gymnastics."

"Don't mention it, my dear fellow," said I; "only too glad to see you at the price."

So my troubles ended; but the letters poor Dolly received for the *care* he had taken of me, on the facts becoming known, may be imagined, but can never be described, by

Yours and the public's very grateful servant.

OUR SCHOOL THEATRE.

BY FRANK MARSHALL.



TO be avowedly egotistical, and to write, in one's own character, of what "I did," and "I said," and "I saw," is never a very grateful task, but in narrating our personal

experiences it cannot be avoided. I propose to

give an account, which may, I hope, succeed in amusing the reader, of a theatre which we established at my first school, thirty-one years ago, and of some of the performances in which I took part. Occasional dramatic representations are now far from unusual at schools, both public and private; but I never knew any other instance of a school in which the theatre was a recognized institution.

Like the great Drama itself, which traces back its origin to Thespis and his cart, our theatre had a very humble beginning. One evening two of the bigger boys proposed to give an impromptu entertainment, to consist of "as much as they could remember of 'Box and Cox.'" They had both seen that popular farce more than once; but I, who was selected to play Mrs. Bouncer, had never even heard of it. I received my instructions, of which the principal one was to enter whenever either Box, or Cox, called "Mrs. Bouncer," and I carried them out to the best of my ability. My part in the representation proved to be more passive than active; for whenever either Box, or Cox, was at a loss for a word, which happened pretty frequently with both of them, they called vigorously for Mrs. Bouncer, and threw something hard, generally a candlestick, at her head: consequently at the end of the performance, which was received with tumultuous applause, I had gained little in the way of dramatic experience, but a good deal in the way of bruises. Whether I bore my contusions with so good a grace as to win the esteem of my instructors, or that I displayed some latent powers of acting in my attempts to dodge the candlesticks, I know not; but from that evening I was selected as the "leading lady" of the "Theatre Royal, Crescent House," for so our dramatic establishment was afterwards named.

The founder and stage-manager of our company was a boy whom we called "Dally." I have a vague idea he was related to somebody who knew Edmund Kean; be that as it may, he was to us boys a prodigy of dramatic experience and talent; we looked up to him with reverence, and he enforced, as will be seen hereafter, the strictest discipline among his troupe. Our school had only about thirty boys in it; the wife of the assistant master kept a girls' school, where many of our sisters were, but they were only allowed to take part in our performances as spectators. To them the first two rows of the pit were dedicated, and with the masters and their families and the boys who did not act, they constituted our audience, which was not a very large one.

I do not think the regular company ever included more than ten, or at most a dozen members; it was considered a great privilege to belong to it, as we enjoyed complete official recognition and patronage, and our rehearsals were strictly guarded from any intrusion on the part of non-members of the company.

But I am anticipating: for it took some time to establish ourselves on a regular basis. The second performance was more ambitious, but it was exceptional; it consisted of an original play, written by one of the company. I do not remember the title of it, but I will call it, "The Fatal Blacking-box." It was of the rudest simplicity as regarded its construction. Every character introduced himself to the audience in a soliloquy, and this they did in succession; so that of dialogue, strictly speaking, there was not much. The first to enter was a serio-comic servant (played by the author), who carried a blacking-box, which he set down at the O. P. entrance, in order that every one of the other characters might tumble over it as they made their

several exits, all of them entering for their respective soliloquies from the Prompt Side. This was the comic element of the piece, which was not a success, and was never repeated; henceforth we relied on the published drama. The production of this unique work—in which, by the way, I had no part—was remarkable for an attempt to establish an orchestra, which also failed. A boy, whom we will call "Tony," burning with zeal and emulation, resolved to organize a band among the non-members of the dramatic company. He chose seven assistants, and with them started on an expedition "down the town" in search of instruments. Each musician hired or bought what instrument he pleased, being guided simply by his inherent predilection, and not by any skill in the art of playing thereon. The overture, led by Tony with a never-silent drum, was a thing to remember. Wagner might have taken a hint from it as far as noise went. Every member of the band played his own instrument as loudly as ever he could—there being no preliminary agreement as to time, tune, or duration of the overture. My head aches when I think of it. Happily the authorities sternly interposed, after the author of the piece had in vain threatened the leader of the band with personal violence.

The next piece selected was "Bluebeard," in which I was cast for Fatima. We made our own dresses, glazed calico and spangles being the chief materials. Wonderful garments resulted from our unskilful efforts, and great disputes occurred over the spangles, of which I succeeded in getting more than my share. I was very proud of my costume, and should have enjoyed the performance most thoroughly, had not Bluebeard, even at rehearsals, been too conscientiously realistic in the scene where he discovers Fatima's disobedience; he really dragged me by my

hair, and after this my second performance I was confirmed in my opinion that the art of acting was a painful one to acquire. But I was not dismayed, and took home the part of Zitella, in "Masaniello," to study during the holidays, delighted with the prospect of being able to get the assistance of my mother's maid in the construction of my dress. "Masaniello" was a great success; and our head-master kindly provided us thenceforward with a movable proscenium and green curtain, the putting up of which in the principal school-room on the day of our performances, was always the subject of great excitement among the boys.

I never was so happy at any school as at dear old Crescent House, and I think our theatre had a great deal to do with it. How we enjoyed the rehearsals! They took place in a room in which our boots were kept, in little pigeon-holes all round the wall, but otherwise scantily furnished; and the fact of the other boys being rigidly excluded, the shutters even being closed to prevent their peeping in from the playground, gave to the whole proceedings a delicious air of mystery. Dally, the stage-manager, sat on a play-box, and put us through our paces with great severity. Woe to the younger members of the company who were imperfect! We had to write out our parts, as there was only one book, which the prompter had. The head-master acted as censor, and, like Colman the elder, "cut out all the damns." Our repertoire was selected chiefly from Cumberland's "British Drama," and would be considered rather a heavy one nowadays. We inclined to pieces of serious interest. I do not think we played any farces; the bill consisting of a drama and a burlesque. "*Chrononhotonthologos*" and Planché's "*King of the Antipodes*" were our

two favourite after-pieces. I do not remember many of the parts I played in the dramas; but Helen Macgregor, in Rob Roy, and the Queen in Richard II. (not Shakespeare's play), were two of them. The latter will always have for me a painful association, as the boy who played Richard II., a great friend of mine, died suddenly, after a short but mysterious illness, about a year or so after I left the school. His was one of the few performances which at all impressed me; he looked the youthful king to the life, and had a remarkably sweet voice. Our leading actors, Dally included, were, I fancy, rather heavy in their style.

The discipline enforced by our stage-manager was, as I have mentioned, very strict. Once I rebelled, but unsuccessfully. Ever since the performance of "Masaniello" I had felt a kind of muffled discontent; why should I be condemned to play stupid girls' parts, when I was so fitted to be a Brigand? The piece was revived, and with it my discontent. The dresses were much improved, and those gorgeous figures with sugar-loaf hats, ribbands round their legs, and real guns in their hands, filled me with envy. I would bear it no longer. I was nearly nine years old, and my breast was swelling with manly dignity. It was the day for a rehearsal. I was cast for one of the most melancholy heroines in our repertoire. I felt the time was come. It happened on that day my mother came from London to see me; I was called away at twelve o'clock to all the joys of a dinner at the principal hotel, and a tour among the shops afterwards. The rehearsal was at half-past four, and I was bound to be back in time for it. To the astonishment of my mother, I refused all chocolate and sweets and other dainties most resolutely. "What would you like, my dear?" she asked. "That

cane," I replied, pointing to one with a lapis-lazuli handle. It was a man's cane, but she bought it for me. I handled it with as much dignity as I could assume. When I got back to my school, it was nearly five o'clock. I walked, cane in hand, and full of manly resolution, into the green-room. "You're late, Little Jimmy"—(a name given me for the very sufficient reason that I had a brother who had been at the same school, whose second name was James, but who never was called by it)—"You're late, Little Jimmy, but as you've been with your mamma, this time we'll excuse you." Thus spoke Dally. The cue for my entrance in the piece came; I did not move. "Now then, Little Jimmy, that's your cue." I grasped my cane, as a support to my dignity, and said, with resolution, "I don't play any more girls' parts; I'm going to play a Brigand, with ribands round my legs!" There was slight consternation among the company. "You will go on with your part," said Dally. "No, I won't." "Oh, you won't." "No; I play men's parts in future," was my stern reply. There was a pause. "What's that you've got in your hand, Little Jimmy?" "It's a cane mamma gave me." "And a very nice one too; let me look at it." I gave the cane to Dally reluctantly, because I felt the possession of that manly article was the mainstay of my courage. "Very pretty," says Dally. "Are you going on with your part?" "No," I replied, "unless you let me play a Brigand with a gun and ribands round my legs." Scarcely were the words out of my mouth, than down came the cane on my posterior regions with a vigour which did credit to Dally's muscular development. I gave in, and went on with my part; and I never rebelled again.

Sometimes there have been moments, I

confess, in later life, when, during rehearsals of a piece of my own, I have been tempted to wish that Dally's discipline could be enforced on other than juvenile actors.

"Tony," whose semi-mutinuous attempt to establish an orchestra I have already recorded, became a most important personage in our company. He was never allowed to act, but he was received within the mystic circle, which he so much coveted to enter, as prompter, property-master, and general factotum. To see him arrange the chairs and tables on the stage was a treat; he was gloriously self-important and most amiably officious. Once when I was playing the Queen in "*Chrononhotonthologos*," one of my satin shoes came off, and down I went on my back, with my hoops over my head; it was Tony who rushed on the stage and dragged me off before the awkwardness of my situation was fully realized by the audience. If the rehearsals were delightful, spite of Dally's discipline, how much more so were the cosy little suppers which we enjoyed after the performance. The "company" supped by themselves, and always had some little extra delicacy provided for them.

My "benefit" and last appearance took place in the part of Imogen, in "*Bertram*." When any of us took a benefit (which was only on leaving the school), the audience contributed presents in kind, such as knives, marbles, pictures, and even "tuck," as all kinds of sweets, cakes, etc., were called. I shall never forget that dismal tragedy of Maturin's. I can only recall one line, the first of Imogen's opening speech—

"The limner's art can trace the absent feature."

I had not the faintest notion what "limner" meant, and my ignorance vexed my soul. I asked Bertram confidentially, at rehearsal, but his answer was vague. "Limner? Oh!

—of course—it means a limner, you know—something to do with limbs.” I went to Dally. “Do tell me what ‘a limner’ is, Dally?” “Look here, Little Jimmy,” was his answer, “I’m not a dictionary, and if you come here asking me impertinent questions, I shall have to give you another taste of mamma’s cane.” At last I ventured to ask the “Censor,” and he solved the mystery. By dint of hard study I mastered the lines of my part. We had a very full house. I was very nervous, and sat shivering before the fire in white muslin, with magnificent back hair (hired for the night at 2s. 6d.) flowing down my shoulders. Bertram consoled me with tea and buttered rolls. I have not the faintest conception what my performance was like, but, I should think, unmitigatedly bad. However, I had a good reception, and the quantity of presents I received from my school-fellows showed the good-will they bore me. I had pocket-knives enough to last me my life, if I had not lost them all, as I did, before the year was out. One present touched me particularly: “marbles” was a favourite game with us, in all its varieties, and great contests took place amongst us. Each had his favourite “agate” or “blood-alley.” One of the latter kind, with which its owner had won several matches, was much envied by all of us, and five times its value had been offered in vain for it, both in coin and in exchange. I coveted it particularly, but could never persuade the owner to part with it. Fancy my delight when, wrapped up in a piece of paper, I found the much-coveted “blood-alley” among the tributes of the audience!

About two years after I left, the “Theatre Royal Crescent House” ceased to exist. Many improvements, including “real scenery from London,” had been introduced; but

some Evangelical parents, hearing of these dramatic representations, objected to them most vehemently, and the theatre was closed for good and all. I can safely declare that, so far from doing us any harm, these humble efforts at “play-acting” did us a great deal of good: our memories were cultivated to a degree that no less pleasant work could have effected, and we had implanted in us a taste for what, to my mind, is the noblest form of all literature, the Drama, in its widest and highest sense.

A PAINFUL PREDICAMENT.

EXPERIENCED BY
GEORGE GROSSMITH, JUN.



SOME years ago, I was engaged, in conjunction with my father, to give recitals at a town some forty miles from London. I arrived at about half-past seven, the entertainment being announced to commence at eight o'clock. I was not due until half-past, as my father's pleasant duty was to occupy the first half-hour, or as he humorously put it, to play the audience in, get them into a good temper, and thus well prepare them for me. I there-

fore took my time, and did not commence to dress till the last moment, when I found, to my dismay, that the most important part of my evening dress had not been put in my portmanteau. Finding that a "pair" could not be borrowed in the hotel, I rushed madly over the town, calling at the public-hall on my way in time to tell my father what had happened, and to go on with the recital until I sent him up word to say I was ready. I shall not easily forget my misery. Nearly every shop was shut; the few that were open did not sell ready-made clothes of any description. At last, in a back street turning out of the market-place, I espied an establishment with many jets of gas flaring, and many pairs of corduroys, white ducks, and bright lavender nether garments (some of the latter marked, "Soiled, 5s. 9d.") hanging outside. I rushed in, positively trembling with nervous excitement.

"Oh, I've met with an accident. I have a party to go to, and have left part of my dress suit behind. Can I hire or even buy a ready-made pair of doeskins?"

Avoiding the question, the man stared at me, and said, "You're Mr. Goldsmiff. I've heard you at the Polytechnic. My boys sing one of your songs with your portrait outside. I know you."

"Will you answer my question?"

The ninth part of a man said, "You won't get a pair ready-made, sir, in the town. People who requires things of that kind want them only for parties or funerals, and then they are made to order."

"Can you recommend a place to go to, or what to do? I am a stranger in this town. I'll pay anything for them as long as I can get them," I said, in desperation, hearing the clock strike half-past eight.

"I have it, sir." What joy there was in

those words! "You're a little man, like myself." As a matter of fact, he was much shorter, and very much inclined to embonpoint.

I said, "Well, go on, I have not a moment to spare."

"I'll lend you a pair, sir, that I had to go to my poor uncle's in."

I shuddered at the idea, and said, "I'd rather buy a pair—yours won't fit." However, it was a case of Hobson's choice. "What have I to pay?"

"Nothing, sir; all I ask is an order for this evening's entertainment."

I would not have had him in the audience for anything. I again insisted on paying.

"Well, if you won't give me an order I'll pay to hear you, sir. I won't take any money of you, sir."

Hobson's choice again. I wrote him a pass while he made me up a parcel, with which I returned in hot haste to the hotel, where I dressed in five minutes. In less than ten I was at the town-hall, where I managed to catch the eye of my father, who was on the platform reciting, and also, I believe, was ingeniously dovetailing Artemus Ward into his selection from Dickens, in order to fill out the time for my benefit. Eventually my turn came. I have purposely avoided mentioning anything about the fit of the borrowed garments, the subject being exceedingly painful to me. Not only did I feel conscious of my absurd aspect, but, to add to my discomfort, I suddenly saw my benefactor seated in the front row of the stalls, regarding my appearance with pride. He never once looked at my face; he was far more interested in the other end of me. At the conclusion of the entertainment, which will be for ever graven on my memory, the tailor approached me, and, in the presence of the

committee, congratulated me cordially on the success—not of my entertainment (I do not suppose he paid attention to a word of that), but of that portion of his own attire in which “he went to his poor uncle’s.”

A WRESTLING MATCH.

By BARRY SULLIVAN.



SOME years ago, while on my first professional tour of America, I played an engagement in New Orleans, and my “Shylock” night will be ever memorable to me, from an occur-

rence that took place in the St. Charles’s Hotel, my temporary abode. During my short stay in the city I had made the acquaintance of a Mr. Rose, a well-to-do man, a great lover of the drama, and a pleasant companion.

On the evening in question my new-found friend had taken seats for the performance, and we were enjoying a quiet chat on the subject of the play, while Mrs. Rose, who had just left us, had gone to her room to make some necessary change in her toilette.

While we were thus pleasantly occupied, a friend of Rose’s, somewhat overcharged with wine, came into the bar, “liquored

up” once more, and with his irrelevant remarks, soon put Shakespeare to flight. He had been to a wrestling match, had caught the spirit of the entertainment, and began challenging everybody to throw him. To my surprise, he eventually challenged Rose, a more powerful man than himself, to try a fall there and then, on the spot.

Rose in the kindest manner possible evaded the challenge. “No, no,” “not now,” “not here,” “some other time,” etc., etc.; but all to no purpose, unless, perhaps, to make the man more insisting and determined to have his own way; indeed, he went so far as to seize Rose by the collar to compel him to wrestle, whether he liked to do so or not.

At last, after being taunted and laid hold of several times, Rose, losing all patience, closed with his tormentor, and threw him heavily. The man, whose name I forget, raised himself slowly, and, without saying a word, lurched sulkily out of the bar. I congratulated Rose on having got rid of such an insolent and importunate person, and a few minutes afterwards took my leave, and strolled to the theatre.

Half-an-hour had scarcely elapsed, when, to my horror, I heard, in my dressing-room, of the tragical termination to this impromptu match. Rose remained in the bar, waiting till his wife should be ready, and talking with his friends; his antagonist returned, walked deliberately towards him, and, without uttering a word, took out a revolver, and shot him in the back. Rose turned around quickly, and advanced upon his assassin—another shot! Still he advanced, and still another shot. The next instant Rose had seized the murderer, wrenched the pistol from his grasp, and with it struck him a crushing blow upon the forehead. Again was the coward’s weapon

raised against himself ; and with the second terrible stroke, both men fell to the ground. His left hand still clutching the wretch's throat, Rose, with a dying effort, got to his knees, raised the revolver for yet another blow, when, with a convulsive quiver, his whole body seemed to collapse, and he fell dead, across the face of his murderer.

The tragedy was so suddenly, so swiftly enacted, that interference or prevention had been impossible.

The corse of poor Rose was borne to his rooms. While ascending the stairs, the sad little procession was met by the unfortunate wife, gaily dressed to go to the theatre with the husband she had left but a short half-hour before, in full and happy life, and whose cruel murder she thus suddenly and hideously realized.

That part of the picture I will not dwell upon ; it may be better imagined than described by me. The wretched man, who had taken such terrible vengeance for his self-sought and well-merited defeat, never spoke again ; he died three days after his victim—slain, and righteously slain, by his own murderous weapon.

BOHÈME.

A FRENCH SONG.

BY HERMAN MERIVALE.

JOYEUX pays des gens joyeux,
Les beaux esprits de ce bas monde,
Pour te donner à nos aïeux,
Vénus sortit jadis de l'onde.
La belle reine de bonté
Protégera tout cœur qui aime,
Et vit toujours, dans sa beauté,
Pour les enfans de la Bohême.

Le musicien va fredonnant
Les doux airs de son répertoire ;
Le peintre vient en exploitant
Les belles couleurs pour sa victoire ;
Le poète rêve le beau,
Chantant en dépit de soi-même ;
Le luth, la plume, le pinceau,
Ouvrent pour nous nôtre Bohême.

La route parsemée de fleurs,
Voilà bien d'autres qui s'avancent ;
En foule viennent ces chers pécheurs,
Les gens qui jouent—les gens qui dansent :
Il est heureux, le Bohémien,
Car, pour bien égayer sa serre,
Il peut cueillir, sur son chemin,
Les plus belles filles de la terre.

Versons le bon vin pétillant,
A l'avenir ne songeons guère,
Si le sort pour nous est méchant,
Vive l'avenir ! buvons la bière !
Nous donnons gaîment d'une main,
Quand nous avons la bourse pleine,
Et de l'autre prenons demain,
Des bons amis qui ont la veine.

Le dévôt maudit son voisin,
Tous les dimanches à la messe,
Mais prêchera pour nous en vain,
Son évangile de tristesse ;
Qu'il se fasse sa propre loi !
Faisons-y guerre, et à outrance ;
Nôtre devise—c'est la Foi,
La Charité, et l'Espérance.

Tout las de travail—où de vin,—
Bien doucement quand on sommeille,
Là-haut, un petit chérubin
Sur nous exprés sans cesse veille ;
Ainsi, quand au dernier moment
La mort à nôtre porte sonne,
Saluons-la en souriant—
" Viens ! je n'ai fait mal à personne ! "

Nous croyons à la Vérité,
La droite ligne de la vie,
De l'amour et de l'amitié
La seule franc-maçonnerie :
Le sage ne croit à rien,
Excepté toujours à soi-même ;
Mais le bon Dieu, qui fait tout bien,
Chérit ses enfans de Bohême.

MY FIRST ENGAGEMENT.

By CHARLES WARNER.



G O on the stage ! I'd sooner stand on his grave." These were the words used by my father when informed by my mother that I had determined to adopt the theatrical profession.

All arguments, all persuasions were in vain. He was firmly fixed in his resolve that I should never become an actor. Nothing on earth could move him. He said he had suffered sufficiently himself by being disobedient, and by doing just what I intended to do ; for I must tell you it was a great grief to my father in after life that he ever went upon the stage himself. Somehow or other it was not congenial to his tastes, and I verily believe he detested it. Possibly he had not sufficient energy and perseverance for it, and the whole thing was distasteful to him ; perhaps it was because he felt very much the loss of his parents, whom he had left one evening on board ship with his brothers and sisters, all bound for America ; he was to have accompanied them, his passage, of course, being taken with theirs, but he never saw them for many years after that eventful night ; and from that moment America claimed, and the civil

war killed, the best part of my nearest relatives.

There is an exception to every rule, and although I know there are scores of young men almost daily situated as I was then—stage-struck and infatuated—still in the long run obedience to advice is far better than the course I took, and my father before me. It turned out well with me : it might be an unlucky disaster to others.

At any rate, the stage I was determined to try. Although I was studying to become an architect, it was not congenial to me ; and one morning I strolled into Bow Street, having, of course, heard my father speak of the agents and a Mr. Turner. Old Mr. Turner, of the Strand Theatre, was a friend of my father's, and to his offices I repaired, presented myself, and told him my mission.

"The stage, the stage ! You're very young, and of course quite inexperienced. I'm afraid I can't do much for you ; general utility, eh ? in a small provincial theatre with good practice best thing. Come to-morrow at twelve."

My heart was bursting with expectation as, next morning, I arrived at the office. I was to be introduced to a manager. I felt dreadfully nervous, but soon gained a little courage as Mr. R——, the manager, kindly spoke to me, and encouraged me ; he thought he might be able to give me an opening as "utilitarian," at a small salary.

"That, sir, is all I desire, only a chance. Let me gain experience ; I don't care how hard I work." He laughed.

"Ah ! you'll find plenty of work, my dear boy, with us."

On my word, he only spoke too truly. I did find plenty of work ; sometimes fifteen parts a week. Well, all was arranged and engagement settled ; but how to get from home ? I

had no properties, and no money, save a few shillings pocket money ; however, I made a confidante of my sister, and she assisted me in my dreadful designs. She gave me about thirty shillings, and with this sum I repaired to Vinegar Yard, Drury Lane, to a second-hand theatrical depôt, and purchased several useful properties—sword, white wig, stockings, etc. ; and these articles, with a few that I had quietly appropriated from father's stock, I thought would furnish me. But, O heavens, when I tried on the stockings they were sizes too large for my shanks : for, I don't mind telling you, I was a long thin youth, very thin indeed ; and my legs, oh, my legs, what was I to do ? Happy thought ! my sister came to the rescue, and made me a pair of lovely legs. She dexterously sewed some pieces of flannel, piled one upon another together, and when I placed them on the spot where my calf ought to have been they looked magnificent.

"There's a leg !" I exclaimed, with delight. "What a muscle !" I thought nothing about my poor body being so thin. That was quite a secondary consideration, as long as my legs were all right.

At length the eventful day arrived that was to take me away. I had never left home before, and I felt heart-sick, for we were all very united and affectionate. Dear mother, how she cried the night before, when I said "Good-bye," and kissed her ! For I was to get away without father's knowledge, and my sister was to meet me at the station to see me off safe. The morning came. We arrived at Euston Square. My sister said she would not let me go alone, so we both jumped into the carriage, and whistle away went the train before I could induce her to alter her mind. What a wretched, wretched journey ! how utterly miserable we both felt when we arrived

at S——, the nearest station to our theatrical town !

On alighting at H——, a few miles' drive from the station, my first anxiety was to find the theatre. I did so, but it was closed. I knocked and kicked at the door, but no reply. I was about retiring in despair, when a man came up with a bundle of bills under his arm and a paste-pot of huge dimensions.

"What dost thee want kicking door down like tha't, thee fool ?" he asked, as he commenced pasting up some bills on the walls.

"I wanted to inquire about the opening night," I modestly replied.

"Oh ! be you one of the players ? 'Cos company don't come back from Lichfield till Saturday, and I'm putting up opening bill."

"Thanks," I said, as I scanned the bill, expecting, of course, to see my name in the cast ; but it was not there, and consequently I imagined that I did not play the opening night.

Saturday came, and I arrived at the theatre to meet the manager on his return from his tour ; for he had several small theatres, and used to visit them in turns during the year. As I stepped upon the stage, he kindly introduced me to the stage-manager, Mr. T——.

"Oh, Mr. Warner ! a slight mistake in the bill. Your name did not appear ; but I have two parts for you for this evening."

That was a cheerful announcement for a young hand at this difficult work.

I trembled with fright. "What, sir ! it's three o'clock now, and two parts for to-night !"

"Oh, yes ; you'll be all right. Here you are," he said, placing parts in my trembling hands—*Bras Rouge*, in "*Mysteries of Paris*," and *Saib*, in "*Castle Spectre*."

"But, sir, it's impossible I can do it."

"Can't do it ! Nonsense, my boy ; you must do it. Clear stage, and we'll run through them."

We did run through them ; and if ever a poor fellow regretted adopting the stage for a profession, I did that afternoon. But I had a wonderful study ; and so I went home and swallowed the parts with a cup of tea. Mysister arranged my little properties, and all seemed well. But I must tell you, Saib, one of the parts assigned, was a black but virtuous slave. My calves were to come into requisition, as I was only to wear black fleshings or tights, with a loose Indian shirt. When night came, I was dressed for Saib, and I heard remarks anything but complimentary from the actors, who all dressed in one long room : my legs—flannel legs—being specially selected for chaff. I must have looked awfully funny ; a tall, raw-boned youth, with very little flesh on my bones, and those enormous legs. Well, I got on the stage, and my first scene nearly over. I had a terrific struggle with Earl Percy, in the piece. On rising from the ground, where he had thrown me in the terrible encounter, there was a loud laugh from all parts of the house. I could not tell, in my nervous excitement, what had happened. Earl Percy pointed to my poor legs ; and there were the huge calves in front of my shins. In the struggle they had slipped round, and deformed my otherwise very straight legs. Oh, if I could only sink through the stage ! But, no, I must finish the scene. And finish it I did, amid the laughter of the whole house. I may add that they made me double a part in this piece, from Saib to a Captain of the Guard. It was a very quick change, and on resuming the dress of Saib, my right calf was nowhere to be found. I was in despair.

"Sir, there is a stage wait for you," cried a voice ; and in my terrible excitement I rushed on the stage, with one huge stuffed leg, and

the other a poor spindle-shank, shrivelled like King Richard's arm.

Never shall I forget the peals of laughter as I entered. Speaking was out of the question. After many vain attempts, I made a most ignominious exit. I never wore flannel again.

After a time, with study and hard work, Mr. R—— prophesied that I should some day make a name. I have struggled for it ; I have aimed high, for my labour is one of love ; and I confess I am rewarded : for my old father, who uttered such prophetic warnings against the wisdom of a youthful impulse, has lived to say, "Charlie, my dear boy, I am glad you accepted your *first engagement*."

A DOG'S TALE.

By JOHN HARE.



THERE are scores of instances of a musing error caused by mistaken identity on the part of the unfamiliar public, when an actor or actress appears off the stage, *in propria persona*, and away from the glare of the foot-lights. Such errors are far more common with the actor of character than with the light comedian, who, as a general rule, keeps his

own face, hair, and appearance in ten out of every dozen plays in which he acts. But the personator of strong character, who is alternately grey, red, brown, white, and black—now of the old school and now of the young, now slim and angular and now stout and puffy—is often difficult to recognize when he is out of his stage dressing-room and mixing with his companions and contemporaries.

As an instance of the mistakes innocently made by the public in regard to public performers, I may perhaps be pardoned in relating an anecdote connected with myself, which, if it does not bear the stamp of novelty, is at any rate unquestionably true. Though recognized as a very old man by the public, I am bound to confess that amongst my friends I am said to be remarkable for the youthfulness of my appearance.. This is an idiosyncrasy which doubtless I shall get over, and it is one amongst many of the sins of youth that can be generously pardoned. Some years ago, I believe I was not more than twenty-seven years of age—the books of the Registrar-General are certainly not so complimentary as my companions—but when such reputation as I possessed had been made as an actor of “old men,” I happened, in the presence of a friend—a well-known London solicitor—to express a careless wish to purchase a bull-terrier dog. The words were no sooner out of my mouth than he told me that he could accidentally help me out of my difficulty, and, he trusted, in the most satisfactory manner. One of his articled clerks happened to be a great amateur dog-fancier, and had just such an animal as I wanted, and one that he would be glad to dispose of. He further added that he would tell his clerk to call on me on the following morning, and bring the dog with

him for my inspection. I protested against putting this gentleman to so much inconvenience on my account; but my friend replied that, so far from being an inconvenience to his clerk, he would enjoy it immensely, as he had frequently expressed a great desire to see me (in whose professional career he was kind enough to have expressed himself much interested) off the stage. Accordingly, the next morning, very early, while I was still in bed, the amateur dog-fancier arrived with the bull pup. I got up, slipped on my clothes, and went down to him; did not like the dog, but took it out of the room to show it to some members of my family. On my return I made some excuse for its not being bought, and he left very abruptly, and apparently somewhat disgusted.

I naturally thought the cause of his altered manner was disappointment at not having found a purchaser; but I was mistaken as to the cause of his vexation, for on meeting my friend, the solicitor, he told me that when his articled clerk returned to the office, he asked him if he had seen Hare?

He said, “No!”

“Why, how was that? I thought you went up to his house on purpose to see him?”

“So I did.”

“And did you take the dog?”

“Of course!”

“Well, what then?” asked the puzzled solicitor.

“Most horrid nuisance! After all the trouble I have taken, and going miles out of my way!” he replied.

“Why, was he not civil?”

“I don’t know. I only saw young Hare; the old boy was in bed, and the young one knew nothing about dogs!”

We have often laughed over that story.

MY DÉBUT AS OPHELIA.

By HENRIETTA HODSON.



WHEN I was fourteen years old, my mother said to me, 'If you wish to become an actress you must begin at once, for you will never do anything on the stage if

you do not learn acting like your A B C at school." So I was sent off to Glasgow.

On my arrival there, the manager, Mr. Glover, told me that I was to receive a salary of eighteen shillings a week, and Mrs. Glover, the manager's wife, explained to me that out of this I ought to put by a little for a rainy day. She had taken a lodging for me, consisting of a room, in which every piece of furniture—after Scotch fashion—was a surprise. The bed was in a recess in the wall, with a door before it, the washstand became a table, and the dressing-table closed up and became a cabinet. So, during the day, I had a sitting-room, and at night a bedroom, all in one. For this I paid four-and-sixpence per week. With the rest of my salary, I had to provide myself with food and clothing. I felt myself quite a millionaire, for I never had had more than a shilling of my own in my life before; but it was difficult to follow the

advice of Mrs. Glover, and to put aside anything, because I could not resist investing my savings in tarts and sugar-plums, and other such perishable commodities.

At first I used to walk on the stage as a speechless peasant, court lady, or page, and to dance in the back row of the ballet. After six months I was given a part of two lines. I sat up all night to study it, repeating the lines over and over again, and placing the emphasis first on one word and then on the other.

When the eventful night came on which I was to speak for the first time on the stage, I was so nervous, that I broke down in my second line. This was considered a great disgrace, and I was put back for another three months into the ballet and the "speechless ladies."

My next speaking part was of six lines, and this, as the manager made me rehearse it to him again and again, I got through without breaking down; on which I became a "speaking lady," and was promoted to the front row of the ballet.

At the end of the year, there was a vacation of a month at the Theatre, and I did not know what to do, for all my "rainy day money" had found its way to the pastry-cook's shop. Luckily a little town near Glasgow had asked one of the actors to come there for a short season, and bring with him a company. He proposed to me to go with him, and we started off by rail, third-class, of course—two gentlemen and two ladies—to perform a series of Shakespearian plays, for we were all of us very ambitious. We were to receive one half of the entire receipts, and we fancied that our fortunes were already made. On reaching the little town, we found that the theatre was a railway arch with a platform at one end, and no scenery. The one

dressing-room consisted of a hole in the back of the arch, divided into two parts by a low screen.

But we were not daunted. Every night we played a fresh tragedy. Of course we all "doubled" and "trebled" parts. In "Macbeth" I played, I remember, Lady Macbeth, Hecate, and the three witches all in one, and sang Locke's music; whilst Macbeth, Macduff, and the gentlewoman joined in the chorus behind the screen.

The last night's performance was announced for my special benefit. The play was to be "Hamlet," and I was to play Ophelia, and Osric in the last act. My first troubles began with my dress, for you may imagine that none of us had a very grand wardrobe. The dress I had worn for Lady Macbeth did for the first of Ophelia's; but as it was my benefit, I wished to be correct in my costume, and wear a white dress for the mad scene, for no Ophelia, I knew, would be considered mad, even in a railway arch, without being in white, with straw in her hair. Now, I had plenty of straw, but no white dress; for Osric, too, I had no costume. As I was sitting over my "tea-dinner," meditating over all this, a brilliant thought occurred to me. I determined to take the table-cloth with me to the arch, as I was certain that I could drape it over a white petticoat for Ophelia in her mad scene; and then, with a sword-belt round my waist, convert it into a tunic for Osric.

I had just settled all this, when a note came to say that Hamlet was ill. It was brought by a Scotchman, who was Hamlet's landlord, and who looked very much surprised when, on reading it, I burst into tears. He asked me why I was crying, and I explained to him that I was in despair at not being able to play Ophelia, for this was

impossible with a table-cloth, but with no Hamlet.

"Hey, dinna fash yoursel', lassie. I ken every worrd o' the pairt, and sooner than ye'll be disappointed, I'll act it mysel'," he said.

"But have you ever played it?" I asked.

"No," he answered, "but I've often been to Glaskie, and seen it acted by the best o' them."

My friend, who seemed, like the table-cloth, to be sent me by Providence, to get me out of my difficulties, was a tall, raw-boned Scotsman, with a shock crop of red hair and still redder whiskers. He did not look exactly like the Prince of Denmark, or, at least, he was not precisely my idea of him.

However, it was getting time for us to be preparing for the performance, so with the Scotchman and the table-cloth I went off to my arch.

The Hamlet of the company was a very short man, but my new recruit had to wear his clothes, and very wonderful he certainly looked when he was arrayed in a black suit, the sleeves of which just reached below his elbows. He did know the words, but that was all. No sooner did he begin to speak, than a boy in the back seats cried out—

"Hey! that's na Hamlet; that's oore Johnny McKillup, wha keeps the sweetie shop where ane o' the play-actors lodges."

After this the play became more of a farce than a tragedy, for whenever Johnny McKillup appeared the audience roared with laughter, in which, notwithstanding my feeling of gratitude to him, I could hardly help joining, for his acting was as peculiar as his accent, and people then had not been educated into enthusiasm for new readings of Hamlet. My table-cloth was a success.

In Ophelia's mad scene it really did look quite like a dress; and when I came on as Osric, with it tucked up, it looked like a tunic. But, alas! when Hamlet was fighting his duel in the last act, and I had to say, "A hit—a palpable hit!" my belt gave way, and I stood before the audience again in the drapery of the mad Ophelia, who had just drowned herself. After this it was impossible to finish the piece. What with Hamlet's red whiskers, and Osric in Ophelia's table-cloth, not another word could be heard. So, in despair, I asked Hamlet whether he could dance a Scotch reel? "Aye," he said, and as I knew that the King and Queen could do so too, for I had often danced one with them at the Glasgow Theatre,

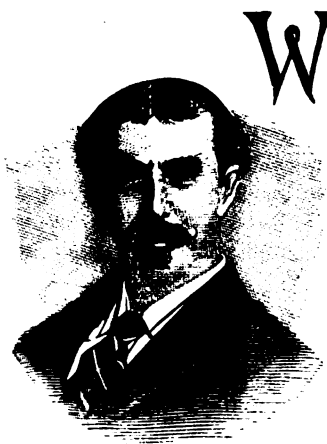
I went forward to the footlights, and told the two fiddlers, who represented the orchestra, to strike up one at once. Hamlet and I, the King and the Queen, took our places for the reel, the fiddlers commenced, and off we went.

The audience seemed at first taken aback by this strange termination to "Hamlet," but the laughter soon turned into applause, and when the curtain came down it had to go up again, for they insisted upon having, not "Hamlet," but the reel over again.

I made three pounds seven shillings and sixpence by my benefit, but little of this was put aside for the rainy day, as most of it went in sweeties that I bought at the shop of Johnny Hamlet McKillup.

XAROLLA: A CIRCUS STORY.

BY ALFRED THOMPSON.



WHEN I first had the honour of making Carry's acquaintance, she was only known as *La Petite Caroline*, and she was then not more than twelve. We were quartered at Spirebury; and when Professor Suttoni's Grand International Hippodrome came

and pitched itself in the Abbey Fields, we hailed its advent with delight.

The officers of the 31st Dragoon Guards, then getting through existence at Spirebury, were considered free of the circus and its surroundings, their presumed knowledge of horseflesh being a passport to Professor Suttoni's stables; and the natural amiability of the equestrian ladies and gentlemen was turned to an affable familiarity with anything in spurs and moustaches that hailed from the cavalry barracks, before the circus had been opened for a week.

Everybody, whether military or civilian, admired little Caroline. There was nothing she could not do. I am not at all sure that she could write, and I never heard her read

more than a playbill; but if she crossed the slack wire, she was a fairy; if she rode her favourite Arab in the *Haute Ecole*, she looked the daughter of a Centaur; and *La Petite Caroline's* benefit was sure to bring old and young to applaud the pretty little creature in every act. She was a perfect child withal, and when we came in the evening to watch the horses saddled and to chaff the company, we were sure to bring cakes or sweets for our pet Carry. A present I made her of a doll in a riding habit, with large, staring, glass eyes, and a real wig, made her my devoted friend at once. We were all quite sorry when the International Hippodrome found all the spare cash in Spirebury had been exhausted, and Professor Suttoni disappeared with his tent, horses, artistes, and all, Caroline included. I went to the station to see them off, and little Carry was loaded with bags of good things as she disappeared with the train to Fishport.

Little Carry was Xarolla.

And now I will tell you how I made Xarolla's acquaintance.

I was walking one summer morning in Paris up the Champs Elysées, with the firm intention of dissipating a headache by a constitutional as far as the cascade in the Bois, where I had promised to breakfast with Teddy Flighter, one of the best fellows that ever stepped in Her Majesty's uniform.

As I passed the Cirque, I saw, in letters six inches high, the word "Xarolla," very conspicuously calling my attention. On reading the bill I found that on that very evening the star artiste, *Mlle. Xarolla*, was to have a benefit, on which occasion not only would she appear on her favourite Arab, "Lightning," but she would also go through her marvellous Balloon Act, in which she was

without a rival. Xarolla was evidently *the* Parisian attraction.

Du reste, I had already seen her praises sung in the columns of the *Figaro*, and I considered myself lucky in getting a couple of reserved seats at the box-office of the Cirque, which I really believe were the last, as I was politely informed when I paid my money.

As I passed on, hoping I should arrive in time to appease my hunger at least, if not Teddy Flighter's impatience, I heard a silvery laugh on my right, and, looking round, saw the very prettiest little woman it has ever been my luck to set eyes on.

Dressed in a tight-fitting riding habit, with a small glossy hat set just a little cocked on her brown hair, which rippled over her eyebrows and struggled to get out of control over the back of her neck, sat in front of a small café a woman who, while rocking her chair backwards and forwards, was slashing her high-heeled boot with an ordinary riding-whip. Though laughing, her teeth were set, and there was a flash in her eye that almost illuminated her brown curls under her hat, and certainly denoted displeasure, in spite of the laugh which accompanied it.

The object of her displeasure appeared to be a gentleman who seemed a cross between a groom and an opera-singer, with a dash of sporting hair-cutter thrown in. He was occupied at that moment with five dogs, who sat up in a row with that broad grin of educated caninity which usually denotes an intense desire to jump through hoops and run up ladders on their way to a meal.

I was evidently assisting at a rehearsal; but judge of my astonishment, as I stopped an instant to see what the dogs would proceed to do, when I heard my own name mentioned, and the horsey gentleman, raising his

head, said, loud enough to scare the dogs on to all fours—

"Gad! so it is! Why, Captain, we were only talking of Spirebury and the old guv'nor Suttoni some five minutes ago. You don't seem to remember my wife?"

The amazon gave a decided scowl as he said "wife," but taking a tiny cigarette from her lips, and looking me frankly in the face with the most wonderful pair of deep blue eyes, and laughing now with a smile that dimpled her cheeks and showed her pearls of teeth to advantage, she held out her hand, crying—

"You've not forgot little Carry you gave the doll to at Spirebury, have you? I haven't, for I have her remains still, Captain."

And this was Carry. I could scarcely believe my eyes as I sat down beside her.

"So you really are La Petite Caroline?" I said, when Carry had sent her husband to find a garçon, who scarcely expected company at that early time.

"Not a bit of it! I'm 'Carry' to you, if you will call me so; but I beg to introduce to your notice, if you have not already seen her, Mademoiselle Xarolla, the star artiste, in the biggest letters I can get printed."

Saying which she rose, and holding her whip in both hands, she curtsied to the right and then to the left, and then kissed her hand to me with an artistic grace that deprived the action of any absurdity.

"You Xarolla? I had no idea I was in such luck. Then all Paris must envy me at this moment; but you don't mean to say you're married!"

"You're just about right, Captain; it is cruel, but it's a fact; and my husband's a clown, and I hate him."

"You don't mean to say that."

"No! He loves me, I believe, in his way, and would not hurt a hair of my head if I behave myself; but circumstances made us marry, and I should not wonder if circumstances parted us. I can't live like this long."

And a sad sigh left her involuntarily, while tears stood in her eyes as she sighed; but they soon made way for a laugh.

"Now you are going to have your coffee here, and we are going to talk about old times. I shall never forget the Irish major who wanted to give me lessons in military riding; and do you remember that stuck-up Miss What's-her-name, who couldn't understand how the officers could talk to such people as poor me?"

"So you are the Xarolla all Paris is running after! I am happy to say I have got seats for to-night, and if a bouquet as big as a cartwheel comes for you, you will know where it comes from."

"Oh, you good creature! we artistes all love bouquets, and the more we get the better we work! This is my first benefit at the Cirque, and I've had thirty-one letters already, promising flowers and suppers, and ardent admiration all round. But Joe is jealous, and makes life impossible."

Joe returned at this juncture, evidently impressed with an idea, which he seemed to have communicated to his five dogs, that I was an obstructionist.

The garçon arrived at the same time with coffee and liqueurs. No amount of Chartreuse seemed to make Joe amiable, nor did the lumps of gratuitous sugar persuade the three poodles and the bulldog that I had a right to be present, though the little fox-terrier had an opinion of his own, and was amiable to a degree that quite overwhelmed me.

Then I stopped laughing and chatting, till I found it would be useless to look for

Teddy in the Bois, and, as a convincing proof, a Victoria pulled up and Teddy himself jumped out, much to my astonishment, as I could not imagine how he could have detected me where I was. As he approached I rose to meet him, and there came a magical change over the features of all of us.

Joe turned livid with what looked like passion. Carry blushed with ill-disguised pleasure; and Teddy Flighter looked almost angry, as he ejaculated—

“You here! I don’t wonder you never turned up at the Cascade. You’re a nice fellow to keep an appointment!”

The poodles and the bulldog evidently knew Teddy well, for they nearly wagged their absurd tails off in recognition. But Joe whistling them up with something like an oath, and hurriedly saying that the rehearsal was waiting, almost dragged poor Carry into the Cirque close by.

I noticed a telegraphic despatch passing between her and Teddy, and a bit of paper fell as she walked off.

I turned away to light a cigar, and on looking round to pay the waiter for the coffee, I observed Teddy straightening himself up, and the paper gone.

As we got into the Victoria, Teddy, after telling the coachman to drive to the Grand Hotel, jerked out—

“How the deuce did *you* make *her* acquaintance?”

I told him simply how we had been old friends when she was a girl who thought of nothing beyond her cakes and her doll; and we drove amicably off to order a bouquet for that night. He confided to me how he was smitten with her uncommon grace and beauty; he didn’t believe she was married; he meant no harm.

However, he would send his own stall

(he had secured one long ago) to a friend, and he would go with me to the Cirque.

* * * * *

Xarolla was to appear first about nine, and we had dined comfortably at Ledoyen’s in time to find ourselves seated for the entry of clowns preceding the *beneficiaire’s* appearance.

Joe had lost all likeness to an opera tenor, and was now in full war paint—red, pointed wig, tight-fitting parti-coloured dress, covered with spangled butterflies, his moustache concealed with white paint, red spots on his cheeks, and black circumflex eyebrows painted on his forehead. *He* had seen us come in, and his whip came down on his poodles, for no apparent reason, with a force almost amounting to cruelty. Joe was popular, and applause made him soon forget his jealousy.

Our seats were close to the entry, and after Joe had left the arena with a fierce scowl at Teddy, a flutter went round the house as all the *écuyers*, in faultless coats and breeches, wearing the shiniest Napoleon boots, ranged themselves in two lines across the ring, while the orchestra preluded with chords and fanfares denoting the solemnity of the occasion.

When expectation was on tiptoe, a beautiful brown thoroughbred mare, with a good deal of Arab in its bright eyes and delicate nostrils, trotted in to the centre, mounted by Mdle. Xarolla in person.

Her reception was what the French would call “colossal,” and to the deafening plaudits she replied by making her horse rear till timid spectators fancied she must roll over; and then, when her mare resumed her normal position, and she bowed all round, the plaudits broke out again with doubled force.

Talk of jumping into people’s affections! Xarolla charged down on every one’s heart,

and carried it off at her whip's point ; but I could not help noticing that though her gestures were for the public, her eyes flashed intelligence with my neighbour's, and certainly there was not a Frenchman or Englishman present who looked more likely to attract than he did. He was the beau ideal of a cavalry officer—but I have no space for descriptions. The bouquets were brought in when she at last finished her performance, prominent among which was an immense circle of white lilac and stephanotis, which I had ordered, and one small tuft of orchids, which she fastened on her habit just over her heart, after kissing it—an action which seemed natural to all those who were not in the secret ; but Joe was not one of these, as she had scarcely time to slip off her horse at the entry before the maddened husband tore the flowers from her corsage and trampled them under foot.

"I don't care ! You can't tear the rest out !" we could hear her say ; and Teddy made a start, which I luckily suppressed, keeping him in his place, though he was evidently boiling over with rage.

In the *entr'acte* we went into the stables, but Carry was not to be seen. She was to appear again before the evening was over.

When Xarolla reappeared, she was led in by the Ring Master, Joe was close behind her, and was evidently finishing an angry altercation. This time she turned round and sent a kiss from the ends of her fingers to my neighbour, whose ears tingled with delight at the compliment.

Little Carry had grown into the beautiful Xarolla without losing any of the grace of her girlhood. Everything she did was without effort, as it seemed—without difficulty.

The ribands had been flown, the banners had been crossed, and now the paper hoops,

which in this case were doubled so as to look like big drums, were held up by the clowns for Xarolla to leap through.

Joe was standing opposite to us, and every now and then gave vent to some "wheeze" which might have been considered personal had any one understood it. He kept up his observations as Xarolla went round, and something she said as she passed seemed to lash him to fury.

Anyhow, when she next came round, as she leapt, the clown jerked the hoops and caught her foot.

One exclamation of horror was heard from all present. The horse was trotting round, and Xarolla had fallen on the "bank," on the wooden rim of the circus, and had not risen. Teddy Flighter had made one spring, and lifted the inanimate form of poor little Carry in his arms, much to the disgust of the *écuyers*, and greatly to the delight of the Parisians, who dearly love anything theatrical.

Teddy carried her off to her room, when Joe arrived and took her angrily from his arms.

"What have you to do with her ? She is not your wife !" said Joe, sulkily.

"Thank God ! I am not her husband, or I might have her death on my conscience," was Teddy's reply, as he turned away, after tipping the dresser to bring him news of her recovery, for there was no bruise and no bones broken. Joe, the clown, really seemed in an agony at what had happened ; and we left him bathing her temples with a woman's tenderness.

* * * * *

Next morning heralded as beautiful a summer's day as Paris ever saw. This time I was determined to breakfast at the Cascade, without a thought of being stopped by Xarolla or Joe, or the poodles and the bulldog, if it came to that. As I passed the little

Circus Café the chairs were there and the garçon, but not a soul besides, not the shadow of a fox-terrier. I was led briskly on to the Bois de Boulogne, and as I turned through the gate of the fortifications, and saw the sun streaming down on the bright trees, I felt that in the shades of those *allées* flirtation on such a day must be more successful than usual. As I approached the lake I heard sounds of cantering horses, and as I looked there came down a side avenue Teddy Flighter on his chestnut "Clancarty," and a lady on a brown thoroughbred by his side. I soon saw who the lady was. All smiles and happiness she was listening to Teddy, who was evidently laying himself out for success. The canter as they came nearer was getting faster and faster, when I heard a shot fired. Down came the brown mare, and the beautiful Xarolla pitched over into the dust.

I rushed up simultaneously with Ted, who had pulled up his horse as soon as he could, and dismounted.

Xarolla never appeared again to be received with plaudits and bouquets. Little Carry was dead, for she had fallen on her neck, her mare having been shot in the shoulders and brought down wounded. The poor beast was lying in the dust with her nose in the hand of her dead mistress. She still wore the old smile, and looked as lovely in her pallor as she ever had before. We opened her dress with the last hope she might be fainting. Her heart was no longer beating, but there were last night's orchids hidden beneath her habit. Teddy sobbed like a child.

Joe has never been seen since that, and the poodles have another master. Teddy has never had a light heart since. Poor little Carry!

AN EPILOGUE.

BY H. SAVILE CLARKE.

THE curtain falls, and all the whirl
Is over of this mimic life,
Some swain has lost a faithless girl,
Or some young lover gain'd a wife.
The passions of an older age
Have fire and force within them still;
Or haply on æsthetic stage,
A modern drama comes to thrill.

And you applaud us, glad to know
How earthly care you can forget,
Which, (I learnt Horace long ago,)
They say "post equitem" sits yet.
But do you ever in your dreams,
And may Heaven send them fair and bright,
Think what sometimes the stage-play seems—
To those who act it every night?

If not, one word ere roll of wheel
Proclaims my lady's carriage there;
Just credit us with souls to feel
Emotion that you may not share.
Remember when we play our parts,
An idle evening to beguile,
That like you we have human hearts,
And mask their aching with a smile.

THE END.

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